# THE POETRY REVIEW

33 PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON W.1

EDITED BY JOHN GAWSWORTH

No. 1 **FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1949** Vol. XL

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## CONTENTS:

PAGE

Editorial .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 3

POETRY

*A Piece from "The Birds" of Aristophanes* : Gilbert Murray, O.M. .. 5

*Swift* : Walter de la Mare, C.H. .. .. .. .. .. .. 6

*April Fool's Day* : Laurence Housman .. .. .. .. .. 6

*Written in Dew* : Eden Phillpotts .. .. .. .. .. .. 7

*Desert* : Hilaire Belloc .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 8

*The Forester* : Wilfrid Gibson .. .. .. .. .. .. 8

*Old Man at the Window* : A. E. Coppard .. .. .. .. .. 9

*Eve Dancing* : Rachel Annand Taylor .. .. .. .. .. 10

*The Gale* : Martin Armstrong .. .. .. .. .. .. 11

*Palming* : J. Redwood Anderson .. .. .. .. .. .. 12

*The Prisoner* : G. Rostrevor Hamilton .. .. .. .. .. 14

*Reflection in Westminster Abbey* : E. H. W. Meyerstein .. .. .. 15

*The Terrible Crystal* : Hugh MacDiarmid .. .. .. .. .. 15

*Imago II* : T. W. Ramsey .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 17

*The Vigil of Venus* : Richard Aldington .. .. .. .. .. 18

*The Nightingale* : Edward Shanks .. .. .. .. .. .. 20

*The Humorist* : Richard Church .. .. .. .. .. .. 21

*The Phoenix* : Monk Gibbon .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 21

*At Evening, In the Sunset* : Thomas Moult .. .. .. .. .. 25

*The Bugle* : L. A. G. Strong .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 25

*For Ania* : Lilian Bowes Lyon .. .. .. .. .. .. 26

PAGE

*Your House is on Fire* : P. D. Cummins .. .. .. .. .. 27

*What is this Weather* : Jack Lindsay .. .. .. .. .. .. 28

*After the Chinese of Tu Fu* : Hugh Gordon Porteus .. .. .. .. 29

*Epithalamion for a Poet* : Randall Swingler .. .. .. .. .. 30

*Twilight—Scent of the Hay* : Laurence Whistler .. .. .. .. 31

*Anonymous Epitaph* : James Walker .. .. .. .. .. .. 31

*Autumn Love* : Harry Milner .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 32

*Karma* : Austin Coates .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 32

PROSE

We Celebrate a Mystery by Ruth Pitter .. .. .. .. .. 33

The Romantic Character by Randall Swingler .. .. .. .. 40

Reputations and Rhythms by William Kean Seymour .. .. .. 44

Lilian Bowes Lyon : Collected Poems by Dr. John Murray .. .. 47

Russian Verse, Tradition and Revolution by George Reavey .. .. 51

T. S. Eliot in Perspective by G. S. Fraser .. .. .. .. .. 52

Vernon Watkins and his Ballad by Peter Russell .. .. .. .. 54

Shakespearian Emendations No 8 by Howard Parsons .. .. .. 57

Shorter Reviews by Iain Fletcher, Jean Kenward and Alice Hunt Bartlett 61

Letters to the Editor .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 65

The Premium Award .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 72

Announcements .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. 76

# OPEN LETTER TO THE READER

*Fortieth Anniversary Year,*
*January,* 1949.

Sir, or Madam,

When this number is published, the Poetry Society will have completed forty years of its existence. Surviving two World Wars, many changes of government, both national and internal, the ebullient youthful hectoring of a score of versifying cliques (whose most gifted members have nevertheless since passed inevitably, and naturally, into the English anthology), it has, as anyone of bibliographical memory must recall, always stood patient and maternal, defending affectionately the good child Poetry, against all turbulent tantrums of the rampageous young. . . or of the querulous old.

But, then, since February 24, 1909, in what field has the Poetry Society not laboured for poetry? Outside the realm of its publications, I refer to its stimulation of public interest in verse, to its attempts to improve the general standard of verse-speaking year after year, to its guidance to those "beginning author", and to the value of its centralizing its efforts at one focal point for almost international convenience.

But I will admit that in one month's tenure of an editorial chair once graced by my old mentor, the sagacious, eclectic Harold Monro, apart from editing this number, I have done no more than explore the File Copies of the Review (a complete set) to make a rapid estimate of our now historic past.

And what have I learned from even this hasty examination? I have received certain confirmation of a suspicion that has long haunted me. I have discovered something of the honourable service to verse that the Society has steadily maintained. For I have immediately noted that *The Poetry Review* in its first forty years has published such memorable poems and plays as: Wilfrid Gibson's *The Stone*, Ezra Pound's *Oboes*, John Drinkwater's *The Fires of God*, James Stephens' *Incognito*, T. Sturge Moore's *The Phantom of a Rose*, Rupert Brooke's *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*, Lascelles Abercrombie's *The Six Men of Calais*, Padraic Colum's *The Poor Girl's Meditation*, W. H. Davies' *Sweet-Stay-at-Home*, G. K. Chesterton's *Ballade of Cheerful Boredom*, James Elroy Flecker's *Art*, Walter de la Mare's *Melmillo*, Lord Dunsany's *The Gods of the Mountain*, Laurence Binyon's *A Mother's Song*, Thomas Hardy's *A Song of the Soldiers*, Alice Meynell's *The Thrush Before Dawn*, Julian Grenfell's *To a Black Greyhound*, C. H. Sorley's *Prometheus Vinctus Loquitur*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's

*Ypres*, Sir Ronald Ross' *The Death of Peace*, Mary Webb's *To an Almond Spray*, Richard Hughes' *Epitaph*, Herbert Read's *The Falcon and the Dove*, V. Sackville-West's *Peace in the Mountains*, Sir Osbert Sitwell's *Subtlety of the Serpent*, and *The Fires* by Rudyard Kipling. I mention a score or so of contributions almost at random; but it is surely a list of which any periodical devoted to poetry would be proud? Readers of our modern *Oxford Books* and enlarged *Golden Treasuries*, and their like, who have found these poems frequently reprinted will think so at least. But that there are many more discoveries to be "re-discovered" is also obvious; and in *Poems of Forty Years* which I should like to compile this year as an anniversary volume for the Society, I could imagine bringing to light a good range of such pieces.

And now I think I should say something of the immediate policy I envisage for this journal. It will save many future enquiries; and I must word it carefully—for I shall expect to be held to it by one and all. ("An editor is without friends".) Simply, it is this:

*Poetry* is welcome, of all types, from all ages, and both sexes, providing it attains a high standard.

In short, the aim of *The Poetry Review* is the aim of the Poetry Society—to widen and deepen the scope of the human vision. New Poets are as welcome as old poets as long as they write as ably, and even if they write better. The best verse on hand at the time of going to press will always compose the next issue, while I edit. That is a threat as well as a promise ... and you will quite rightly be at liberty to watch that I justify my words with editorial performance.

One last word, *The Poetry Review* is not a paper for 'professional' poets, nor is it a journal for 'amateur' poets—it is just for 'poets'.

Now that I have confessed myself, I will hope that you will join with me in my thanks to those who have contributed to this first of our three Anniversary numbers. Our fourth issue this year is being especially designed to stress the qualities of lesser-known writers and I heartily invite contributions.

Sir, or Madam,

I remain, etc.,

Yours,

JOHN GAWSWORTH.

# A PIECE FROM "THE BIRDS" OF ARISTOPHANES

## GILBERT MURRAY, O.M.

*CHORUS calling to the NIGHTINGALE, who has just arrived.*

Friend! Sweet voice, whom above
All winged things we love,
Partner in all that I sing,
My comrade, Nightingale dear,
You have come, you have come, you are here
In clear vision before us,
Sweet melody on your wing,
And the flute's reawakening;
O living voice of the spring
Give the lead to our Chorus.

*The NIGHTINGALE plays a prelude and then accompanies the CHORUS LEADER on the flute.*

LEADER:

O Humans, ye natures so dimly alive, like leaves that blossom and fade,
Ye little-achievers, creations of clay, impermanent tribes of the shade,
Ephemeral, wingless, much-suffering mortals, Men, that are
shapes of a dream,
To Us, the immortal, surrender your minds, Us ever alive and a-gleam;
Us, dwellers in heaven, eternally young, whose philosophies never
shall die,
Till ye learn from our teaching the ultimate truths, the secrets of
stars and of sky,
The Being of Birds, the Becoming of Gods, Streams, Chaos and
Erebos; so
You can bid the astronomers shut up their shops, for you and you
only will know!
There was Chaos at first, and Erebos black, and Night, and the
Void profound;
No Earth, no Air, no Heaven; when, lo, in the realm of the Dark
without bound,
In a vortex of winds the first of all Eggs was laid by black-winged
Night,
And out of the Egg, as the seasons revolved, sprang Erôs, the world's
delight,
His back soft-gleaming with feathers of gold, his heart like a
whirlwind storm;

And he with Chaos the winged and dark, being mixed in the Void without form,
Begat the original nestlings of us, and guided them up to the sun.
The Immortals had never existed at all till Erôs made all things one.
For at last, as one kind with another combined, came the Earth and the circling Sea,
And the Sky, and the heavenly race of the Gods ever-living; but eldest are we,
And foremost of all happy dwellers in heaven; and verily all things declare
We are children of Love, for we fly as he flies, and when true lovers meet, we are there.

## SWIFT

WALTER DE LA MARE, C.H.

That mighty mind!
Those bleak, undaunted eyes,
Never to life or love resigned!—
How strange that he who abhorred cant, humbug, lies,
Could be deceived by such simplicities
As age, as ordure, and as size!

## APRIL FOOL'S DAY

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

We are getting to the short night,
And 'summer-time' is near;
And now, within a fortnight,
The cuckoo may be here.

The silences are voicing,
And song brims loud,
And a rainbow hangs rejoicing
On a clear April cloud;

And the little loves are meeting
In field and copse and glen,
As spring comes defeating
The dark deeds of men.

For wrath can black-out reason,
And cities it can slay;
But the promise of the season
It cannot take away.

O Man, what a Hell you
Have made of earth and sky—
The wise bird will tell you;
And 'cuckoo' he will cry.

## WRITTEN IN DEW

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Dew-drenched the world, all pearly gray
And, glimmering white at peep of day,
Each thorn and blade a treasure bears
Won from the sad dawn-mother's tears,
Where Eos wept her Memnon slain
Again, again.

Over the dew-fall runs a blur
To tell some little wanderer:
The pattern of a plover's claws,
The passing of field-mouse's paws,
Or other humble child of time
Upon the rime.

Their shadowy trail is gone apace;
Its trivial message leaves no trace,
But vanishes for none to find
At touch of rising sun and wind:
Conscious, unconscious, there are few
Even mark the dew.

How oft a shining deed of might,
Like lunar rainbow on the night,
Fires sleeping soul; but, come the day,
That arc of silver fades away:
The ghost of glory, Hope's wan gleam,
Another dream.

## DESERT

### HILAIRE BELLOC

I stood in the desert and I watched the snows
Of Aurès, in their splendour from the west.
Sahara darkened: and I thought of those
That hold in isolation and are blest.

They that in dereliction grow perfected:
They that are silent: they that stand apart:
They that shall judge the world as God's elected:
They that have had the sword athwart the heart.

## THE FORESTER

### WILFRID GIBSON

The buzz-saw, screeching as it cut
Its way through pine-planks, filled the hut
With such a tearing din,
He heard no footfall on the sill,
And not an inkling had, until
The belt snapt and the blade stood still,
A stranger had come in.

But as he dodged the flying belt,
Side-stepping, a soft touch he felt
On his left shoulderblade;
And, turning, looked with mute surprise
Into unknown green-shadowed eyes,
The colour of a pond that lies
Deep in a forest-glade.

Dark eyes that held no daylight gleam
Looked into his; and in a dream
With icing blood he stood;
As, in the presence looming there
With cloudy plumes of pine-dark hair
He recognised in cold despair
The spirit of the wood—

The spirit of the wood that he
For years had ravished, tree by tree,
To feed his ravening mill:
And, as she turned with sighing stir,
Unquestioning, the old forester
With halting footstep followed her
Over the darkening sill.

## OLD MAN AT THE WINDOW

### A. E. COPPARD

The fall of the year is as fair
  As the time of its springing;
In the forest, unconquered though bare,
  The last leaves are swinging.

Lean woodland and orchard and vale
  Now quit of their burdens
Have rendered to harvest its tale
  Of tributes and guerdons.

All the wild hunters awake,
  And they count him a dullard
Who goes not down to the lake
  To shoot at a mallard.

Bring coats against cold for the squire,
  Give sacks to the ploughman,
Warm fur for the ladies' attire
  And clothing uncommon.

Fat hares and fat geese and fat kine,
  Such hams in the pantry—
How plain is Jehovah's design
  In care for the gentry!

An old mare draws a bright plough
  Up meadow, down meadow;
Each furrow that follows her now
  Is tilling a shadow;

Such shades as are tilled by the years
  Grown leaner and greyer,
As though to emblazon the fears
  Turned from each layer.

For time takes its tally of time
  With process deceiving;
Into palace and cot it will climb,
  A thief ever thieving.

Aye me, what a curtain is drawn
  Over singing and sighing!
Day comes and day goes, and the dawn
  For ever is dying.

The barge on the silent canal,
  The horse at the cable,
Move on from farewell to farewell,
  A dream in a fable.

A clock strikes four; the old mare
  Turns home to manger;
New-risen the moon is aware
  Of twilight and danger.

Delay not, deride not, O thief,
  With the doom you are bringing;
Let the fall of the year be as brief
  As the time of its springing.

## EVE DANCING

### RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR

Eve danced alone in Paradise,
  Alone in a green glade.
She danced in an immortal Wood
  For joy that she was made:
Her slim feet wove their saraband
  On flowers that could not fade.

The dancing-girl of God, she cast
  An apple in the air;
And like a banner round her flew
  Her wonderful bright hair,
While the apple-trees that must be roods
  Knew a divine despair.

Five petals of the pale wild rose,
  Her virgin senses kept
Their fragrant dews: her elfin eyes
  Had never burned nor wept,
For, an amber faun in a golden trance,
  Still dreaming, Adam slept.

## THE GALE

### MARTIN ARMSTRONG

The night's alive
With hosts of huddled shapes that whirl and strive.
Trees, grass and thickets, combed to one great fluxion,
Stream on the gale that with a long-drawn suction
Empties the world, then, from a listening lull,
Like monstrous bellows blows the whole world full.
The air has mass and weight: it strikes the farm
A giant blow swung by a giant arm.

These walls, this roof have shouldered doggedly
Four centuries of storm. Why then should I,
So sheltered and in spite
Of reason's comfortable voice, tonight
Bathed in instinctive terror lie?

It may be that a thousand years ago
Some woman of the north in childbed lay
Beneath a gale like this and caught her breath
At every thundering blast,
While her blond-bearded man, far out to sea,
From shattered sails and mast
Two hundred fathoms plunged to icy death.

# PALMING

J. REDWOOD ANDERSON

*To Peggy*

(In "palming," the patient is told to cover his eyes with the palms of his hands and to think of some pleasant scene.)

"Think of some pleasant scene," she said:
I thought of how, one close of day,
I sat, the pine-boughs overhead,
The Berwyn Hills two miles away—

The calm hills sweeping east and west
In long bare lines against the light,
Their sides in living forests dressed,
And, at their feet, half-hid from sight,

Half-hid by evening's gathering shade
And evening mist, now gathering fast,
The little town that I have made
My refuge from the murdered past.

Between the Berwyn Hills and me,
Flows, beautiful although unseen,
That "Water of the God," the Dee,
A winding silver fringed in green.

Against the east ascends the Gaer,
A burning dome of gold and red,
Where the last daylight's dying fire
Burns to its embers cold and dead.

Down to the west the gentle ground
Slopes, plough and pasture, to the plain—
The plain, by running woodlands bound,
And sloping to the hills again;

Save where the distant valley shows
Far southward vistas misty-pale,
Fading to where the faint hills close,
And even thought's far vistas fail.

But what would this sweet pleasance be
  Were it not for you, who, for no wage
But of good friendship, made me free
  Of all its happy acreage?

You, the blest Genius of the place,
  Whose loving labour seems to call
From watchful Heaven some special grace
  On house and garden, byre and stall.

And on all things that live and move,
  On horses, cattle, goats and geese—
As if each creature felt your love,
  And gave you, for your guerdon, peace.

I hear you, though I see you not,
  With basket, gathering as you go:
I hear you in the sheltered plot
  Under the firs, where the herbs grow:

There's apple-mint, whose crushed leaf smells
  Sharp as ripe apples stored in loft;
Rough borage with its shaggy bells,
  And wormwood, Persian-kitten-soft;

There's rue, and common mint, and thyme,
  Angelica, and sage, I know—
I hear you like a quiet rhyme,
  Move on your journeys, row to row.

And 'tis enough to know you there;
  I do not ask to see, to speak:
I breathe, and breathe a saner air;
  I look, and find the peace I seek.

The faces of the hills are lost—
  A long bare line against the sky:
The foamless line of time's long coast,
  The foreshore of eternity.

For night usurps the skies of day,
  And I must go before night comes:
"Goodnight!" I cry, and take my way,
  By stile and darkening field-path, home.

The last I see, the ragged tops
  Of pines against the lessening light;
The last I hear, soft wood-wind stops,
  As though an owl had cried, "Goodnight!"

She said: "Think of some pleasant scene";
  And so I bade these pictures rise,
And live upon the magic screen
  Of my closed eyes.

## THE PRISONER

### G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

This prison, yet this palace, where I dwell
  Is such—he said—as I would have it be:
Fair, with five windows, Thou didst build the cell—
  Yet Thou, the Jailor, biddest me be free.

Freedom enough, unknown to me the chain.
  Why vex me, Lord? This palace let me keep,
For Thou didst give it. Yet again, again
  Thy summons! From this prison I must leap.

The convict, breaking from his narrow room,
  Crouches in circle of the prison yard:
And I, from the body breaking, in the gloom
  See higher walls and every exit barred.

Beyond my windows a whole world of night
  Rises against me. Vain to cross the shelf.
To reach Thee, I must scale all form, all height,
  All matter of one substance with my self.

Anguished if I escape this dying flesh,
  A universe still rings me with its bars.
How extricate me from the iron mesh?
  How mortify those limbs of mine, the stars?

Pull, oh! pull down, lay low with Thy own hand
  The terrible structure, roof and architrave.
Then find, at the last, me lost; man me unmanned;
  Me pinned beneath sever, O Lord, and save!

## REFLECTION IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

Death has an odd way with contemptuous persons:
Not far from JOHNSON's stone lies JAMES MACPHERSON's.

## THE TERRIBLE CRYSTAL

HUGH MACDIARMID

To

Sadie MacLellan (Mrs. Walter Pritchard)
one of Scotland's leading artists
in stained glass and glass engraving.

Clear thought is the quintessence of human life.
In the end its acid power will disintegrate
All the force and flummery of current passions and pretences,
Eat the life out of every false loyalty and craven creed
And bite its way through to a world of light and truth.

Give me the open and unbiased mind
Valuing truth above all prepossessions to such an extent
As to be ready to discard them all
τό κατ' ἄνθρωπόν, and, furthermore,
Is content to approach Metaphysics through Physics,
In the Aristotlean sense in so far
As it recognises that empirical factuality
Can best be attested in that domain,
And is therefore impelled to recognise in the cosmos
A dynamic and teleological character

And by virtue of that recognition
Stands not far from religion
—A teleology essentially immanent,
God's relation to the world being in some general way
Like the relation of our minds to our bodies.

This is the hidden and lambent core I seek.
Like crystal it is hidden deep

And only to be found by those
Who will dig deep.
Like crystal it is formed by cataclysm and central fires;
Like crystal it gathers into an icy unity
And a gem-like transparence
All the colour and fire of life;
Like crystal it concentrates and irradiates light;
Like crystal it endures.

Since only those who have looked upon tragedy
Can dare to behold it
It is terrible to uninitiated eyes.
Yet in this white stone
Those upon whom tragedy and catastrophe are come
May find their cure and their redemption,
For it has been formed in tragedy
And calcined in catastrophe.
I have seen refractions of its purity
In the facets of seers past and present—
Virgil's day-star dawning over ruined Ilium;
Kierkegaard's "arousal broad awake"
Out of his "dread and trembling";
Barth's "horizon light" breaking through the dark obscure;
Brunner's lightning flashes in the midnight of "eclipse";
Heim's "two infinitudes" beyond the boundary of dimension,

—Visions of a transcendental country
Stretching out athwart the temporal frontiers;
The sacrificial "salutation of the cleanness of death"
On the part of Joan the Maid
—All, indeed, but broken lights,
Partial gleams reflecting each in their degree
Some aspect of the white intensity
Of that single central radiance,
But all carrying the same gospel:
"When consciousness is crucified upon circumstance
Give praise!"

The poetry I seek must therefore have the power
Of fusing the discordant qualities of experience,
Of mixing moods, and holding together opposites,
And well I know that the various facets
Of sensibility, sensuous, mental, and emotional,
And its alternating moods
Cannot be fully reconciled

Save in an imaginative integrity
That includes, but transcends, sensibility as such.
Our time opposes such integrity
As much as it demands it
And to struggle through complexity to simplicity
Is therefore as necessary as it is difficult.

## IMAGO II

T. W. RAMSEY

Look at me!—I am growing old,
  The years in their courses have stormed me
And wasted; what do you see, my love?
  Red of the fire that warmed me.

Parchment and leather and thin bone,
  The sweetest turn so—
Can you find fire so far under years?
  I warm my hands by the glow.

But there are mists in the night and tears
  That time and sorrow spill
Slowly over the fire—does it darken?
  The fire burns still.

But there is evil and evil glows
  With a red heart like fire—
How shall we know the true from the false?
  The true does not tire.

Does evil tire that flourishes
  Like the small green tree?
Evil is weary as soon as born
  And sets none free.

Will love tire never that wanders
  Under a changing sky?
He draws strength from his own flame,
  My brilliant butterfly.

# THE VIGIL OF VENUS

TRANSLATED BY
RICHARD ALDINGTON

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

Spring, made musical by songsters, earth-wide Spring is born again.
With the Spring comes lovers' rapture; birds are mating; nuptial rain
Pours in sparkling drops to brighten emerald buddings on the boughs—
Under shadowy trees tomorrow Lady Venus binds the spouse,
Binds the wilding ways with myrtle, and to morrow from her throne
Gives the Law of sensuous beauty binding all that lives her own.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

Then the blood of Saturn mingling with the Ocean's spume and roar,
In among the twi-hoofed steeds and sea-gods azure as the sky,
Bears with gushing show'rs the Foam-Born, Lady Venus from on high.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

She it is who comes with flowering gems to star the crimson year,
She who laughing bids Favonus breath his western warmth more near,
Till the breast-like buds grow tender, shining now with silver dew
Scattered by our Lady Venus when the dying night breeze blew.
See! like happy tears the dew-beads sparkle as they swell and drip,
Ev'ry drop a rounded diamond as it leaves the flow'r-bud's lip·
See! the crimson petals slowly have unveiled their maiden blush
For the stars sent down their dew-shower in the midnight's solemn hush,
And the virgin buds come peeping from the bosom folds of green;
Venus orders: "Let the roses as of old be naked seen!"
Born of Venus' blood and kisses of the Son she loves the best,
Born of gems and flames and sunsets flaring crimson in the West.
So tomorrow when the saffron wedding-garments leave her side
Like an unsheathed rose shall blossom ev'ry unashaméd bride.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

Venus orders ev'ry nymph tomorrow to the myrtle grove;
With them goes that nimble archer golden arrow-shooting Love.
But if Love comes armed with arrows, he will wound or slay us all?
Fear not, nymphs; Love drops his weapons; Love keeps Venus' festival.
Naked shall Love come tomorrow, Love shall greet you all unarmed;
Not with steel nor shaft nor flamelet shall the virgin's breast be harmed.
Ah! but maidens, trust not Cupid ! Never trust the lovely lad !
For when laughing Love goes naked Love is most for battle clad.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

Virgin Dian, Venus sends thee maidens virgin as thy train;
One thing only do we ask thee—free our greenwood dells from pain,
Let thine arrows slay no wild thing, soaking mossy lawns in blood.
Venus' self would come to greet thee, would'st thou yield thy virgin bud;
Venus' self would run to meet thee, could lov'd women still be maids;
Night by night thou'dst see our lovers singing through the silent glades,
Blessèd bands of happy lovers praising Love that never fades,
All among the rosy garlands and the myrtle-scented throng,
Cheered by Ceres, cupped by Bacchus, captained by the Lord of Song.
All night long with maddened music all the woodland shall resound.
Holy Venus shall be queen there! Holy Dian, yield this ground!

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

Venus holds her Court of Lovers on Mount Hybla's flow'ry leas,
And the Graces sit beside her as she utters Love's decrees—
Hybla! cast thy flow'rs before her, ev'ry petalled bud that's thine.
Hybla! let thy flood of blossoms robe the meads of Proserpine.
There shall come the country naiads, all the nymphs of lonely hills,
Nymphs of ev'ry grove and forest, goddesses of springs and rills.
At the bidding of Love's Mother all are seated by her side,
Venus, who herself has warned them naked Love can not be tied.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

She it is renews the blossoms in the shadowy haunts of green
When the wedding of the Aether with the waiting Land is seen,
When with clouds the Springtide Father brings the vivid year to birth
And the husband show'rs are drenching all the open lap of Earth,
Till her mighty womb grows fertile and her mother eyes grow kind
As her all-pervading Spirit fashions blood and flesh and mind,
She the Procreant directing all the hidden fertile pow'rs
Through the seas and skies and mountains and the meadows rich with flow'rs.
She it is who guides the seed of sacred Man and beast and corn,
She who tells all lovers living how the new life shall be born.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

She it was who bade the Trojans and the Latins end their strife,
She who gave to her Aeneas the Laurentine girl for wife,
And to Mars the trembling maiden torn away from Vesta's shrine,
She who forc'd the Sabine women with their foemen to entwine,

Bringing forth the Roman People, and from Romulus our sire
Unto Caesar, her own grandson, She has raised them ever higher.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

Pleasure makes the meadows fertile, all the meads with Venus thrill,
And young Love that boyish Love-god was conceived by Venus' will.
When the shining furrow bore him swift she hid him far apart
And with petalled kisses fed him as the love-child of her heart.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

See the flanks of placid cattle crushing all the tawny broom,
Each secure in nature's wedlock, heifer bride with shaggy groom;
See the ewes and rams are gathered bleating in the pleasant shade,
Hear the merry birds whom Venus bids sing loud in ev'ry glade.
Now from raucous marshes honking cries the wild swan from her nest,
And the nightingale is sighing from the trembling poplar-crest
As if Love himself were breathing through the music of her throat,
Pouring for her martyred sister bitter lovely note on note.
She sings on, but I am silent. When will Springtide come for me?
When shall I be like the swallow calling over land and sea?
I have lost the Muse by silence; Phoebus' lip in scorn is curl'd—
So by silence sad Amyclae perished mutely from the world.

*Let the loveless love tomorrow, let the lovers love once more.*

## THE NIGHTINGALE

EDWARD SHANKS

Now in that oak there nests a nightingale.

Some think her rather a disturbing thing,
Others adore her. But the bird will sing,
Careless of all us humans in the house.

What could she know of us?
The mating nightingale
Follows her own compulsions and must sing,
Must sing, must sing,
To human beings a disturbing thing.

Now has her clutch been laid. In every shell
Lies the new voice to trouble us again,
Us who are troubled by our own desires,
Us who are troubled by our own desires . . .

## THE HUMORIST

RICHARD CHURCH

Struck by a falling leaf,
I stared up at the blow,
And saw a giant oak
Over me below.

'That's a big adversary,'
I thought, 'for a touch so small.
He must be in good humour
Though the year's at the fall.

'He's old, and many winters
Have harped with icy hand
In those brittle branches,
And thrown on the land

Year after year of his vigour,
Leaving him stiff and sere.
Odd, he should still be playful
With the end so near.'

## THE PHOENIX

"*The mind is its own place.*"

MONK GIBBON

Can the phoenix of the mind
Rise above its late despair,
Rise into the upper air,
Spread its wings and leave despair,
Mount in widening curves to find
Sunshine that might almost blind,
Paths of light where no feet go,
And mountain tops of lonely snow?

Can it, can it, can it go
Deeper than pain, further than woe,
Till looking down it rests its eye
On no mere mirage or fantasy,
But on a vast serenity?
Can it detect in hidden hills
Glades where joy runs in humble rills,
Or, scanning far, at last behold
Moments, if not an age, of gold?
Can it, winging steadily higher
Reach where its kindred did aspire,
Till, hung like them in sudden azure,
It makes all time and space its pleasure?

Or has the bird bedraggled grown,
Too much sorrow too long known,
So that its power to range and soar
At last belongs to it no more,
Unable now to draw delight
From the time-mellowed, distant sight,
Or wheel and circle and find soon
Beauty beneath a rising moon?
Does it trail a dingy wing,
A broken, frayed and feeble thing,
Not soiled from any wayfaring
In airy spaces but from where
The dust of earth heaps care on care?

Trail it it does and must—a thing
Scarce worthy to be called a wing
Whereto each day like mud there cling
Abundant cause for murmuring.
Earth-bound, it gives its sole attention
To its few anxious yards of prison,
Or, if it lift its gaze to heaven,
It sees the whole horizon darken.
All present, past and future sorrow
Seem to breed deep within its marrow,
And in its crazy bloodshot eyes
Reels a mere nightmare of the skies.

I saw the phoenix droop and die,
I saw it writhe in agony;
I saw it shed all pride in pinion,
Had sunk from such a high dominion.

I saw it clutch the imagined weight
Of all past, present and future hate,
And draw it like a madman's pall
Down on its spirit; I saw it fall
In a slow stupor worse than death,
Choked by its own miasmic breath.

It is the phoenix, though it lie
In deepest, darkest misery,
Or self-inflicted slavery.
A spark still lurks within its being
To save it from complete undoing.
Its pinions caked with petty care
Ceased days ago to beat the air,
But, if it choose, it can discover
How, once again, to mount and hover.

Upon the pyre of its anguish
I saw it cease at last to languish,
As slowly crept around that pyre
The cleanness of consuming fire.
Nothing remained of its own nature
Save the stripped elemental creature,
Aware, since all is burnt in turn
That, now, even its cares must burn.
All carking, trivial circumstance
Shrivelled to ash within that furnace,
The aching dread, the timid yearning
Alike were scorched in that great burning,
And what before had weighed so leaden
Lost in the blaze its power to sadden.

So, like a man who comes at dawn,
Most battle-weary, to a stream
In a steep hillside place so silent
Only the birds and grass seem present,
Who, kneeling first to dip lax fingers,
Strips slowly off his rags, then lingers
Naked, but glad to see fall from him
Such blood-stained, tattered, foolish apparel,
I saw the phoenix welcome fire
As he must welcome and desire
That stream's swift cleanness, knowing only
Peace to have found a spot so lonely.

Deep in the desert of its pain
The phoenix was reborn again.
Out of its anguish was rekindled
The very strength that had most dwindled.
Its life force quickens; the molten embers
Of suffering which it scarce remembers
Through the shrunk sinews slowly stealing
Seem to have warmed it back to feeling.
Up from the grey and lightened ash,
The shards of self, there comes a flash
Of rainbow-plumaged hope, upspringing,
Holding the promise of future winging,
And lo, the magic bird, a nestling
Born of this bitter salt-blue fuel,
Stretches its wingspread in renewal!
It is alive, it is beginning
Its instant, ancient task of winning,
Not space to stand in mud and rue it,
But vantage point from which to view it.

Back to its native element
The phoenix of the mind now went.
I watched it circle slowly, then
Mount and wheel and mount again.
It will rise high, it will range far,
It will discover the evening star,
Or, plunging low beside a stream
See glow-worms in a maybush gleam.
It will find that innocent laughter
Can be to it thirst-quenching water,
And that a wisdom men re-waken
Can stand as firm as rocks unshaken.
Wherever joy, wherever kindness
Lay out of sight of its late blindness,
It will by seeking come upon them.
And draw a present solace from them.
Poised almost motionless, its feather
Will catch the breath of all fair weather,
Or, beating into storms persistent,
Will know that calm lies not far distant.
At last, with wingbeat grown more certain,
It will press upward towards that curtain
Which veils with cloud a sun whose shining
Warms sometimes even man's repining.

Deep in the desert of its pain
I saw the phoenix born again.
The bird has died before this day,
Will die again, I hear men say;
But, despite anguished earth's long sighing,
It is the phoenix and undying.

## AT EVENING, IN THE SUNSET

THOMAS MOULT

At evening, in the sunset
(That never shall flame again),
A sombre cart came rumbling
Across the shadowing plain
To the dark house in the lane.

"Say, for whom is the coffin
That gleams in the red low skies?"
" 'Tis for a woman surely.
Though a man in the coffin lies
Always a woman dies."

## THE BUGLE

L. A. G. STRONG

Don't quarry him a tombstone. Stop the hearse,
Open the coffin, let the dead man fly.
He loved a girl, he left a book of verse,
And that's enough to be remembered by.

He loved a girl? Then tell me, what of her?
Has she a child? No, that he was denied.
She kept her body like a sepulchre;
It was, I think, the reason why he died.

He wrote her bitter verses? No, they sing
Like thrushes in a thicket after rain.
He gave her thanks and praise for everything,
He blessed her for the marvel of his pain.

Dig out a stone, then, vilify her name,
The cross-grained one, his worse, his colder half!
—He loved her. Who are we, to praise or blame?
His book of verses is her epitaph.

But while they talk, the dead man blows a call,
His incorporeal fanfare of release,
Crying "My rose, my miracle, my all,
I have no body now, and love is peace."

## FOR ANIA

LILIAN BOWES LYON

Aspen, gleamy aspen,
A storm had washed the air
And along the river rambling
I felt a rush of gladness—
Oh shadow-shaken aspen
It was more than I could bear!
In a twinkle you were trembling;
I had never seen before
So bright an arrow quiver
In your water-green core.
What joy, what a sadness
You and I share,
Young aspen by the river
When a thunder-shower's over
And it's mine you are for ever
In your rain-of-gold hair.

# YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE

## P. D. CUMMINS

Your house is on fire and your children are gone,
Gone—gone.
Out of the huddle of hiding we came
To thaw our bleak bones at the scurry of flame,
To warm our weak hands that will no more slide on
The sheath of false spring over shuddering flesh.
Your house is on fire and your children are gone,
Gone—gone.
They leapt like glass fish in the glittering mesh,
They were drenched in pure gold, they were fearlessly bright,
Their fingers were torches, their tresses were light.
They burst into beauty and cried on your name,
And then they were gone,
Gone—gone.
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

Your house is on fire and your children are gone,
Gone—gone.
Out of our icy concealment we crept
When the spark swept
From its dark crevice and put forth its roots,
Feeding upon
The worm-rotten wainscot and throwing off shoots,
Swirling its buds and its leaves till a single
Luminous blossom streamed on the shingle.
Your house is on fire and your children are gone,
Gone—gone.
Wreathed and garlanded, free and bound,
They stood at the windows, each one aisled
In vanishing shadow, bound and free,
Free as the flame that waved and shone,
Lit with their desperate doom, and we
Clapped our hands as they smiled, they smiled,
As their hearts cracked wide with a cannon-sound.
They are gone—gone,
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

Your house is on fire and your children are gone,
Gone—gone.
The seas are dry, the rivers are silted,

The buckets are holed and lie uptilted,
The brooks are frozen; from empty sockets
Gush, not tears, but hissing rockets.
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

Your house is on fire and your children are gone,
Gone—gone,
Come away as the last wall crashes
Where once their beauty shone.
Come away,
The flower withers and turns grey,
Crawl with us into empty niches,
Lurk with us in the brakes and ditches,
Stay no longer, come afar,
Leave the sum of your grief untold.
What will you find when the smoke-cloud lifts
And curls away in its tattered drifts?
Only the rooftree's fuming ashes,
Only the nails that will not hold,
Only an ember for a star
Our breath falls coldly on.
Come away,
Come away as its last light flashes,
They are gone—gone,
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

## WHAT IS THIS WEATHER

JACK LINDSAY

What is this weather which tears out fine feathers,
darkens the jewel-flame lighting the seas,
rips all the trinkets from trumpery trees,
and roughens the rump of its dowdy daughters?

The tree of song withers
and cold on my hearthstone the frog mutters.
Who dies in the chimney?
who rattles the keys
of the coffin enclosing our profligate fathers?

What is this fairy transformed to a fury,
the risk of a game to a violent fact?
I covered my face and the homestead was sacked.
I wept and in turbulent flood rose the waters.

I danced until weary,
in the dancing of danger forgot to be wary,
and when I reached home
the ghost had evicted me,
wickedly tricked me, while I was merry.

Shadow grew prickles against my fists
and fences erected in fields of sun.
Dead in a ditch I dreadfully dreamed
with nettles for comfort and a murder done.

My wife sank lost in my dank breast,
my daughter died in the crook of my knee,
my son died in the pit of my eye
with darnel for deathweed and a memory.

My hands broke off with a puff of dust.
snapt at the wrist, and my feet at the ankles,
Hands smote my face, and feet my belly,
and then they left me, with a loss that rankles.

The thoughts in my mind which the dance had twined
as a garland lasting a year and a day
dried into thorns and riddled my skull,
and then they left me, but the pangs stay.

What now remains in the gallows moon
but a hole in my bone where the wind cries
and a memory echoing into the wind
of a murder done in the pit of my eyes?

## AFTER THE CHINESE OF TU FU

HUGH GORDON PORTEUS

Formerly, in my position as Government Censor,
I was able to offer my chief
Reams of calligraphy, set out in vertical lines.

Nowadays, being by nature inclined to inaction,
I live by the riverside, sheltered behind bamboos.

Once, riding a charger, I led deputations.
Now I prefer my own counsel. I spend the day fishing.

Who was it never repented of trekking up hills,
To enjoy looking down?

Who was the fellow who saw through the fraud of "the Rites",
And kicked against custom?

Banners with leopard-tail pennants
Fly from the Governor's Residence:
Who can deserve such absurdities?

But I see the approach to my hovel requires a new path:
I must borrow a hoe and a mattock.

## EPITHALAMION FOR A POET

RANDALL SWINGLER

Albatross Poet, haunting her slender course
Across the long waves of passion, do not suppose
You can command forever
The floating domination of the air:

She, with a single glance, will shoot you down,
And as you lie, straddled on her slim decks,
A fallen angel, your heavy wings grown wide
With mortal longing, and your white
Abstraction darkened by the earth's desire,

Be comforted: she too
In compassing your wild and eager fall
Has lost her freedom's luck, and even now
Founders in love's enclosing deeps, where all
The world's light at last comes home.

## TWILIGHT—SCENT OF THE HAY

### LAURENCE WHISTLER

Moving . . . Some moving thing,
Some remote tenderness,
Something back out of childhood—
The scent of a dress,
Or low, continual singing;
Feminine . . . yes.

A girl . . . a girl mother,
Murmuring an old air,
Old out of nursery shadows,
A ribbon under the hair,
A little boy in her arm
Marvellously fair.

Marvellously blue
The eyes that cling
To a world where love is easy,
And love will sing.—
An image of great purity,
A moving thing.

Warm thatch for a hill,
Sweet warmth for a wind,
Something in your simplicity
Is good to the mind;
Utterly removed from evil,
Utterly kind.

## ANONYMOUS EPITAPH

### JAMES WALKER

The mountain he could climb. Its hazards beckoned
Towards the diamond air, the rare fulfilment;
Called to the braggart in him, to the taker
Of risks and chances, the happy-go-lucky seeker
Of dares, the endearing irresponsible boy
Reckless of consequence, cunning in execution.
The mountain he could climb. It was the molehill
That brought him tumbling and that broke his neck.

## AUTUMN LOVE

HARRY MILNER

The violence of your love is over,
There you stand withered, quarrelsome and old,
Like a dead thistle in a field of clover,
Your barbs as powerless and your womb as cold.

Nuzzling its head against the dying bark,
See the young berry glisten on the tree,
By creepers, cold, thin, treacherous and stark,
That mock the passing of virility.

Nature pours scorn upon too passionate lovers
And parodies the fire that burns too long.
Better the love the cold earth smothers,
When the young heart is quick, and the limbs strong!

## KARMA

AUSTIN COATES

In dark hours men will say:
"Life is unjust.
One hut falls and others stay."
But Karma must
Sing the melody unsung
That prophets hear
And all men bear
To an appointed grief:
The saint his belief,
The serpent his poisoned tongue.

# WE CELEBRATE A MYSTERY

## RUTH PITTER

*(An Address to the Poets' Club.)*

We, the lovers of poetry, are a very diverse company. What is it that binds us together—men, women and children of such various ages, antecedents, avocations, and temperaments? We celebrate a mystery: something elusive and indefinable, though many attempts have been made to define poetry; true poetry, as distinct from mere verse. (I hasten to add that I'm not deprecating verse. Would to Heaven that more people would study the craft of it. How I sympathise with the well-prosodied gentleman who said of a contemporary, "He write verse? Why, he can't even write poetry") . . . Define poetry? We know we can't. True poetry can only be experienced; the nearest approach to a definition is "Words raised to the condition of music". That bright bird poetry slips through the net of secular thought; it's bound to do so, if, as I think, one of its parents is celestial. Hence, of course, its perennial attraction, is durability, and—its mystery.

But poetry isn't merely a mysterious thing in an unmysterious world. It is only a facet of the Total Mystery. Mystery only vanishes from any aspect of life when we falsify by abstraction. We *must* make abstractions. We *have* to look at life piecemeal, for utilitarian reasons, bearing as we do the curse of separated time and space. Any attempt to consider the total implications of a given situation raises the spectre of the mysterious at once. Think of a man tuning a great bell. It's quite a simple workshop problem, though of course a skilled one; all he has to do is to make up his mind how much bronze to shave off, and then to get busy and do it. No mystery at all. But if we start to consider the whole subject of Bells —their historic and emotional implications, the metal and the sound it emits as parts of Nature, the man who is doing the work as a solitary and unique piece of life, of madly complicated origins and destinies—the little shaving of bronze that has fallen by his unheeding foot becomes the centre of a great cloud of appalling mystery.

Poetry then is only a part of the general mystery—of the way life appears to us apart from the desperate, pathetic simplifications we have to make. Put the other way round, that means, of course, that all human beings are poets all the time, except when they are busy over-simplifying. They can't all write the poetry down. But they all live in terms of poetry —witness the irrational fear and awe, the irrational delight, alas, the irrational hopes, never still in every human heart. And they all speak in terms of poetry; witness the enormous tissues of metaphors, living and

dead, which constitute our languages. So written poetry is really deep calling unto deep, an unknown reaching out to touch another unknown.

But my subject isn't the whole of poetry considered as mystery, though it must be so acknowledged before we can proceed. I wanted rather to consider poetic mystery as a particular effect within the whole—no doubt to falsify by abstraction, but also to get some amusement, and to speculate a little on an aspect of poetry—perhaps the central and vital aspect—that has always powerfully attracted me, and quite refuses to explain itself completely. Not mystery in the detective-story sense, of course—not the mystery of plot and counterplot—but that quality in poetry which produces an effect of awe, out of all proportion to the literal meaning of the words, or even at variance with the literal meaning. Musical effect? Certainly, quite often: but in a large residue of cases the effect seems due much more to association of ideas in the reader. He is unconscious of them; they have been outgrown and perhaps forgotten, but they condition his emotions; they are lurking at his roots, ready to spring out at a touch and to make him violently prejudiced about the colour of a woman's dress, the way the family ought to behave, or the significance of the poetry he is reading. Sometimes this is quite obvious. An outgrown idea has *not* been forgotten, and we can see the process at work in ourselves. The tense watching feeling of a child in the dark—a motionless alertness tinged with terror—that's the mainspring of the mystery in Walter de la Mare's justly famous poem, "The Traveller".

But often the feeling is quite unaccountable; the outgrown idea has been forgotten and buried; and it's then, I suppose, that we get the ancient, fearful, magical, pagan character of poetry; the hoary spell, the incantation, the word of power, the thing that once made poets terrible and reverend, the thing that still secures a lingering supernatural prestige for the whole subject, so that intelligent and romantic young people still think the idea of being a poet "terrifically glamorous."

Ancient things often seem romantic, and mere obscurity will often make us project an adventitious enchantment. You may see a young child completely fascinated by a word he doesn't understand; chewing it over in a corner as though it were something delicious to eat. We have to take all that into account. But even so, the ancient poetry seems to have the most mystery, as though words had more force and vitality nearer the source. The old poetry is, of course, the young poetry. C. S. Lewis well expresses the fate of words as they grow old and die.

> They ache and freeze through vacant seas
> Of night. Their nimbleness and youth
> Grows lean and frore: their meaning more,
> Their being less: life shrinks to truth.

We've only to read the old ballads to prove it. The meaning is often obscure. In places it may always have been tenuous—they wouldn't have worried about that. But the *being* of the words is always virile.

Perhaps that's why the ballads so often make our flesh creep. It's nothing so simple as mere horror. It is sheer mystery, overwhelming in its hypnotic power. Do you remember the words of the dead lover in "Clerk Saunders" ?

O cocks are crowing on merry middle earth,
I wot the wild fowls are boding day;
Give me my faith and troth again,
And let me fare me on my way.

Now it isn't the literal content of any words there that makes the mystery. If that were so, "wild" and "boding" would be the words that mattered most, and they don't. To be sure they have a terrific musical effect with their long vowels—the whole line is the purest poetry; but to me the most significant word in the whole verse is "middle".

O cocks are crowing on merry *middle* earth.

Now why this homely, familiar, useful word—a word, mark you, which isn't the least obsolete to-day—why this word in that place should have such an effect I can't tell. It may have awful associations from of old; perhaps the *mid-gard* of our ancestors wakes and stirs in our blood; perhaps it reminds us that if earth is *middle*, there are also other regions, of nameless fear and wonder, above and below; I don't know; but the fact remains that this homely word, in its place, is truly awful; and it seems to me to open an abyss of poetic insight. There's a curiously similar effect in "Christabel"— I mean of the most commonplace words having an overwhelming value in their context.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray;
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the spring comes slowly up this way.

"Small and dull" ! What an effect ! Is it the muted, muffled quartet of half-rhymes—"full, small, dull, chill"—the actual dulling and diminishing of the sound which spreads the sense of a sick, drooping life over the whole stanza—which makes us see that sickly, small moon and shudder at her ?

There's that other strange, dreadful little poem of Coleridge's, too—so seldom seen in anthologies, I think people are afraid of it. I know I am. No one knows what it means. I don't want to know what it means; I feel it is better not to know the full meaning of "Ne Plus Ultra". It seems to contain hints of perdition, and some of the actuality of madness. Perhaps it was an opium dream. Certainly it recalls to the mind the medical axiom that while the neurotic reacts wrongly to a normally-

perceived world, the madmen perceives clearly and reacts correctly to, a world utterly different from our own.

*Ne Plus Ultra.*

Sole positive of night !
Antipathist of light !
Fate's only essence ! primal scorpion rod,
The one permitted opposite of God !
Condensed blackness and abysmal storm
Compacted to one sceptre
Arms the grasp enorm
The intercepter,
The substance that still casts the shadow death !
The dragon foul and fell,
The unrevealable
And hidden one, whose breath
Gives wind and fuel to the fires of hell !
Ah ! sole despair
Of both th'eternities in heaven !
Sole interdict of all-bedewing prayer,
The all-compassionate !
Save to the lampads seven
Revealed to none of the angelic state,
Save to the lampads seven
That watch the throne of heaven !

I think it isn't insignificant that my examples so far have leapt from the ballads to the Lake Poets. It looks as though the poetically mysterious had been rather scarce all through the great meridian season of English poetry. It isn't abundant even in Shakespeare—he wasn't that kind of poet: though I'm quite sure he *felt* it in the old poetry, because the bits he puts in here and there are full of it. "Childe Roland to the dark tower came", and "He is dead and gone, lady". I do think that the Phoenix and the Turtle has poetic mystery, to a very high degree, almost from beginning to end, but I suspect that the Phoenix and the Turtle is a highly disingenuous poem—it was apparently done to order, and I'm rather shy of it; it seems to be "pour mieux confondre le critique"; as though that consummate artist had been able to turn on poetic mystery as deliberately as we use a semicolon, and might be laughing in his sleeve. The bare idea that poetic mystery might possibly be produced as it were in the laboratory upsets me very much. Here and there in the plays there are little nuggets of it which cause no such misgivings;

The crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood.

They made themselves air.

The long day's work is done
And we are for the dark.

In Milton, too, one looks for poetic mystery largely in vain, among all the splendours; it *is* there, but sparsely, as though the full Mediterranean sun of the classics had dissipated all but a few shreds of the magical Northern mists. In the Nativity ode, there are two or three mysterious phrases:

The lonely mountains o're,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edg'd with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent.

The magical line is "Edg'd with poplar pale"—it is evocative to an inexplicable degree: and later on

The yellow-skirted fays, etc.

"Yellow-skirted" has always transfixed me with a sense of enchantment; perhaps because it is so totally unexpected: and he manages to hint somehow that yellow is vaguely unholy, just as blue can be elsewhere; blue, the innocent, heavenly, favourite colour that can seem so ghastly in a bewitched candle-flame, or in the eyes of Shakespeare's Sycorax, or the furnace about which the dancers evoke "the grisly king".

Of the poets nearer to our own time, I think Tennyson had the secret as much as any. For all his magnificence, he can occasionally glide close to one; and suddenly one hears the low whisper, and feels the touch of the ghostly wing. I think he has the hypnosis of poetry stronger than Keats or Shelley—he was more at home with the commonplace; and there is an intense magic in the commonplace and familiar when it is suddenly invested with an altered significance.

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
Which held the pear to the garden-wall.
The broken sheds looked sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.

Nothing there but the most familiar objects: and yet a spirit has passed before one's face.

About a stone's cast from the wall
A sluice with blackened waters slept.
And o'er it many, round and small,
The clustered marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:

For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding grey.

He has described a nook of the Fenland, as simple and innocuous as can be; but he has filled its simplicity and vacancy, God knows how, with an appalling desolation; so that the refrain of longing for death is the natural human reply.

I find a good deal of poetic mystery, too, in the serious poems of Thomas Hood, undervalued for many years, but now apparently beginning to be more respected. There's many a touch in "The Two Swans" which might be envied by poets of greater reputation, for all it's a fairly close imitation of Spenser: and one stanza I think is magical: the captive prince at the moonlit window, listening to his enchanted love in the guise of a swan, singing on the dark lake far below.

And forth into the light, small and remote,
A creature, like the fair son of a king,
Draws to the lattice in his jewelled coat
Against the silver moonlight glistening,
And leans upon his white hand listening . . .

The wonder there, I think, lies in "small and remote" and "creature": we see the thing in glittering miniature, partly so vivid in the moonlight, the jewels flashing even at a distance; partly so indeterminate with enchantment that for all the glitter and clarity we aren't sure what we see. But the most extraordinary passage in Hood's work is a fragment; it is breathless with beauty and mystery. Hood had known what it was to lose children; I wonder if this passage would otherwise have been so instinct with love and death?

And there were spring-faced cherubs that did sleep
Like water-lilies on that motionless deep;
How beautiful! with bright unruffled hair
On sleek unfretted brows, and eyes that were
Buried in marble tombs, a pale eclipse!
And smile-bedimpled cheeks, and pleasant lips,
Meekly apart, as if the soul intense
Spake out in dreams of its own innocence . . .
So lay they garmented in torpid light,
Under the pall of a transparent night,
Like solemn apparitions lulled sublime
Into eternal rest—and with them Time
Slept, as he sleeps upon the silent face
Of a dark dial in a sunless place.

Mr. de la Mare says of this passage, "This power so to use even commonplace or overworn words—innocence, dark, dial—that, like Cinderella, they are not only transformed as at touch of a magic wand, but seem to shed light on all around them, is the sovran mark of a poet. Set in this unique order, obedient to this rhythm, they resemble the sounding of a

decoy in a haunt of wild birds, stir far echoes in the mind, arousing an inner and secret self".

There is a passage in the work of a modern poet, Dorothy Wellesley, which I think is strikingly similar in mood to that wonderful fragment of Hood's, and seems to merit the same kind of approbation. It is taken from her "Ode to Death", in a little book called *Lost Planet.*

> Imponderable star, with no light-miles between
> Thyself and earth,
> From art of numbers are no shadows made
> For thee, thou star!
> There daytime and the light as heaven are,
> Leaving man shaking on the edge of thought . . .

There's a great deal of poetic mystery in that "art of numbers". It has more than one meaning, and so it baffles while it entices. The composite or multiple symbol always does. But the best line, I think, is "There daytime and the light as heaven are". Two everyday substantives and one of the over-familiar transcendental order; the verb transposed, one concludes simply to get the rhyme, and that rhyme and that transposition have often been done before; and yet how the line moves me, and how glad I should be to have written it myself!

But I think that perhaps Francis Thompson has summed the whole thing up in one mysterious and paradoxical poem. He has learned what all poets, what all souls must ultimately learn—that the source of the mystery, the object of all desire, is beyond nature; and that only by the transcending of our own nature shall we ever find it.

> Pierce thy heart to find the key;
> With thee take
> Only what none else would keep;
> Learn to dream when thou dost wake,
> Learn to wake when thou dost sleep.
> Learn to water joy with tears,
> Learn from fears to vanquish fears;
> To hope, for thou dar'st not despair,
> Exult, for that thou dar'st not grieve;
> Plough thou the rock until it bear;
> Know, for thou else could'st not believe;
> Lose, that the lost thou may'st receive;
> Die, for no other way can'st live.
> When earth and heaven lay down their veil,
> And that apocalypse turns thee pale;
> When thy seeing blindeth thee
> To what thy fellow-mortals see;
> When their sight to thee is sightless;
> Their living, death; their light, most lightless;

Search no more—
Pass the gates of Luthany, tread the region Elenore.

Where is the land of Luthany,
And where the region Elenore?
I do faint therefor.
When to the new eyes of thee
All things by immortal power,
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
That thou can'st not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star:
When thy song is shield and mirror
To the fair snake-curled Pain,
Where thou dar'st affront her terror
That on her thou may'st attain
Persean conquest; seek no more,
O seek no more!
Pass the gates of Luthany, tread the region Elenore.

## THE ROMANTIC CHARACTER

*Catullus*: The Complete Poems, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary by Jack Lindsay (Sylvan Press, 9s. 6d.).
*Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene*: by Leicester Bradner (Cambridge University Press, 15s.).
*John Keats*: *The Principle of Beauty*: by Lord Gorell (Sylvan Press, 7s. 6d.).
*Poems of John Keats*: edited and with an Introduction by John Middleton Murry, decorated by Michael Ayrton (Peter Nevill, 12s. 6d.).
*Byron for To-day*: selected with an Introduction by Roy Fuller (Porcupine Press, 5s.).
*Poems by Lord Byron*: three volumes edited by Guy Pocock (Dent, Everyman Library, 4s. 6d. each).

Reviewed by RANDALL SWINGLER

Of these poets, undoubtedly Spenser seems the most remote and archaic, the most modern Catullus and Byron. Keats struggled and is torn between the two. Yet all of them can be taken as representative of different generations of living poets, differing attitudes to the old conflict between Poetry and Life.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,

Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts:

Catullus could never have written that. All joys, all poetry for him sprung direct from the agonies, the strife of human hearts. His poetry is the direct and uninhibited expression of his life in the waking world.

I hate and love. You ask how that can be.
I do not know. But know it's agony.

"With that epigram" says Jack Lindsay in his Introduction, "a new depth of consciousness entered the world. It is one of the great moments of the spirit." It is also the beginning of modern romantic poetry.

What is the distinction? It lies, I think, in the recognition that the conflict out of which true poetry springs is a conflict inside man himself, and not a conflict between two worlds, the ideal and the real. Keats, more cruelly torn between the harshness of experience and the consolation of dreams, struggles to the end to create a beauty which comprehends both, which is, in fact, the resolution between the two warring elements, the actual and the possible, the hate and the love. Catullus, only aware of the inescapable duality of emotion, of the division within himself, discharges his passion directly into life, and his poems crackle out of him like sparks between the opposed terminals.

Spenser, on the other hand, whose world was no less unstable and perverse, retires behind an arras of allegory and baroque symbolism, to weave a static tapestry of the ideal world. That tapestry, as Professor Bradner has so lucidly explained, could only be woven of threads drawn from real life and the poet's experience in the world, but being so dyed and translated into ideal terms, they remain flat and historical. Most readers have taken Hazlitt's advice and ignored the laborious inner significance for the pictorial decoration. Professor Bradner's book, useful as it is to the student, only reinforces the limitation of Spenser's references to the historical situation in his own time, and makes him more than ever a "student's poet". However, while this book contains many controversial points (such as the identification of Duessa with Mary Queen of Scots throughout the poem), it is particularly timely in correcting the common impression that Spenser languished in Ireland. In fact, Spenser's life there was both busy and successful, and he came to regard it more as home than England. Like a great inventor, Spenser's enormous services to English poetry were expended in the opportunities he opened up for later poets' development, more than in the surviving power of his works.

"It is impossible to escape from toil
O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting:"

Keats, in that rather cold sonnet to Spenser, seems also to confess rather guiltily his remoteness. Admirers of Keats can be divided generally into those who prefer *Hyperion* and those who prefer *The Fall of Hyperion.* Lord Gorell, though he would not allow any word written by Keats to be less than charming and miraculous, is among the former. Mr. Middleton

Murry among the latter. Criticism of Lord Gorell's book would be as inappropriate as criticism of a love-letter. It is as rhapsodical and at times as embarrassing. It is a work of naive and self-confessed idolatry, which tilts with a number of windmills whose vans have long ceased to beat the air. Lord Gorell is so insistent on the complete severation of poetry from life that he will not allow poor Fanny Brawne to have had anything but a benign and dove-like influence in Keats' work. He is among those to whom poets and poetry are 'divine', and therefore beyond the necessity of understanding. It is small wonder that Mr. Middleton Murry is to him an almost Mephistophelian figure, and Leigh Hunt the one regrettable influence which Keats allowed into his poetic life. The insistence that Keats was completely unknown throughout his life seems to overlook the fact that his work aroused considerable controversy among the leading literary magazines, fierce enough to lead to a duel between the editors of the *London* and *Blackwoods* in which John Scott of the *London* lost his life, in the same month as Keats himself.

Keats' is pre-eminently the kind of poetry which repays understanding, and whatever reservations we are compelled to make of Mr. Middleton Murry's imaginative recreation of the poet's mind in his *Keats and Shakespeare*, there can be no doubt that his work has enormously enhanced the poet's importance and interest for the modern reader. He is certainly the man best qualified to make a selected edition of the poems, and this volume is extremely welcome at the present time. It is beautifully produced, a delight to the eye, the poems arranged in chronological order in such a way that the whole presents a swelling graph of the poet's growing powers. Particularly gratifying is the restoration to its due place of the "Cap and Bells", in which Keats made a hoist at Byron with his own petard. Not that the quality of this last unfinished squib must be over-rated (and Mr. Murry gives it no more than its due meed in his introduction); but Keats' reputation has suffered in the past from a too-fastidious plucking of posies from his abundant crop, and the inclusion of this, with some of the earlier ballads like "Old Meg" and "Dawlish Fair", dispels once and for all the taint of mawkishness which undoubtedly has dyed the impression left on many minds by previous selections.

Not a taint that can ever have touched Byron; but Mr. Roy Fuller has been very stringent in his selection to present him as a purely satirical poet. Keeping within the strict reference of his title, Mr. Fuller has picked only those pieces which seem to have a direct application to contemporary life. "It is precisely because so much of Byron's romantic poetry is . . . second-hand that we find it hard to read it now: conversely, that very quality made it immensely acceptable in its own time—that and Byron's own personality." That seems to me a very acute and apt observation, which one could amplify by pointing out that the personality too was second-hand, or rather type-cast. Byron was only acting out on the world stage the part of the stock romantic novel hero, the "new man" of the Napo-

leonic era, Onegin, Pechorin, Julien Sorel, the type of the aristocratic rebel, walking his disdainful and disillusioned tightrope between the dispossessed landlords and the new bourgeoisie. His accent and idiom is careless of the intellectual prejudices of either. His pungent and colloquial verse is to him a weapon of love or hate, part of the essential equipment of the self-contained and independent individual. Probably no satirist has ever been quite so open, passionate and direct in his attack, nor maintained the dexterity of his sword-arm so consistently to the end. This book, and Mr. Fuller's excellent introduction, should be a great stiffener to those plaintive voices who bewail the flagging power of poetry.

And finally Catullus: the wild boy of classical poetry, who seems suddenly to flare up unannounced with a voice of incomparable richness and passion in that turbulent era preceding the establishment of the Roman Empire. Mr. Lindsay, with an admirable combination of scholarship and imaginative vision, provides both the background and the detail to form a vivid and revealing picture of the poet and his times. His translations illustrate with an exactness not achieved by any previous translator, the flexibility and figurative colour which Catullus introduced into the Latin language, making it capable of a limpid lyricism comparable to Sappho's. Sometimes I think he errs on the side of too light a touch, too colloquial an accent.

> You're all-but-island, Sirmio: for me
> the dearest island pupilled anywhere—

hardly conveys the music of the "wandering watery sighs" of the famous original:

> Paene insularum, Sirmio, insularumque
> Ocelle . . .

but in the love lyrics, where the passion is just bridled by light irony, the savage epigrams, and the longer poems like the wild orgiastic "Attis," these translations have a bold life which brings Catullus right forward into the contemporary scene, the first poet to announce nakedly to the world,

> Traveller, know I am here to show
> Your own divided heart.

# REPUTATIONS AND RHYTHMS

*Tribute to Walter de la Mare on his 75th Birthday* (Faber, 15s.).
*Seed of Adam* and Other Plays, by Charles Williams. Int. by Anne Ridler (Oxford, 6s.).
*Homer's Odyssey,* translated by S. O. Andrew (Dent, 10s. 6d.).
*Spirit of Youth,* Children's Anthology, compiled by D. D. C. Barclay. Foreword by F.-M. Lord Wavell (S.P.C.K., 8s. 6d.).
*Spirit of the Trees,* compiled by Ruth Alston Cresswell. Foreword by V. Sackville-West (Socy. of Men of the Trees, 12s. 6d.).

Reviewed by
WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

Ours is not an age conspicuous for its generous treatment or recognition of great men. Some few fortunate warriors and statesmen draw dividends of public honour and reputation from the sunk capital of general catastrophe, but in the main it is fair to say that the age is mean and grudging of praise. It is the more satisfying, therefore, to find a happy private thought become a general concern and a living English poet honoured in a way the Athenians would have approved. It is surprising, but it seems to be a fact, that Mr. Walter de la Mare has celebrated (quietly, I assume, with some mimbling-mambling fairies in attendance) his seventy-fifth birthday. That, to our younger poets—and all writers are by courtesy "younger" until they pass their fiftieth year—must sound like a pretty good tenure of earthly time; but what are seventy-five years when the heart is young, the eye keen and the imagination most lofty and profound?

*Tribute to Walter de la Mare* is a miscellany of appreciation from forty writers. The Poet Laureate is here to honour the new Companion of Honour, with Mr. Blunden, Mr. Priestley, Sir Edward Marsh, Mr. Eliot, Mr. Day Lewis, Lord David Cecil, Mr. Graham Greene, Mr. Robert Lynd and so many others. Claiming that there is "a de la Mare world, unlike anybody else's" Mr. Priestley's essay moves to a noble conclusion:

> "The door on which the traveller knocks may open into another universe. Time and place here are those of dreams. Pull the bell-rope and the final horror may arrive to answer your summons. We are perpetually on the edge of things, moving warily in the borderland. Yet the figure who guides us through these regions, with that massive head and those features from an antique Roman coin, is noble and compassionate, never letting go of our common humanity, eager to praise, swift to pity, discovering beauty in the darkness as a man might find a rose in the night:
>
> *What lovely things*
> *Thy hand hath made . . .*"

Of the prose tales of Mr. de la Mare Lord David Cecil says finely:

> "The style is a complex highly orchestrated affair, rich with imagery, freaked with archaic words and poetical turns of speech, and moving in slow, winding, incantatory rhythms."

Of his short stories Mr. Graham Greene says they are written in:

> "prose unequalled in its richness since the death of James, or dare one, at this date, say Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson comes particularly to mind because he played with so wide a vocabulary—the colloquial and the literary phrase, incorporating even the dialect word and naturalising it."

But these are technical analyses, and this book is so much more than literary dissection: in the fullest sense it is a tribute of praise to a great living poet who has drawn back the curtain of appearances and made us feel the intangible and know the unknowable in work of a lovely and consistent integrity.

The regretted death of Charles Williams in 1945 evoked a notable volume of essays from several of his chief admirers last year and now four short plays in his highly individual verse appear in *Seed of Adam and Other Plays,* with a valuable introduction by Mrs. Anne Ridler. His mind was the most effortlessly brilliant I have ever encountered (I enjoyed his friendship intermittently over a score of years) and whether it was in talk or in the ceaseless output of his mainly devotional verse and critical and creative prose he dazzled me with the variety of his gifts. In poetry he was an Anglo-Catholic pre-Raphaelite, but with little awareness of an audience. He was, as Mrs. Ridler says, "preoccupied with ideas rather than form" when he came to writing verse-plays, "but drama was natural to him because ideas existed in a state of tension in his mind". But to have a mind that works dialectically does not make one a dramatist. I may be wrong about these short plays, but, reading them I cannot see them as having the simple dramatic appeal either of the old Miracle Plays or, for example, of Mr. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral.* The drama is in the hair-splitting, and hair-splitting is difficult to convey on a stage, whether secular or in a church house. But the sheer poetic richness of the material and the ingenuity of a strongly personal verse-technique make every line interesting to the student. Note, for instance, the interior rhymes in this passage from *Seed of Adam*:

> "Dullards of darkness, light's lazybones,
> poor primitives of our natural bareness,
> where's your awareness? will moans and groans
> for gold of brawn or brain regain
> the way to the entry of Paradise?"

When a new verse rendering of Homer's *Odyssey* is made by one whose work in this field has already received the imprimatur of the late Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch we may be sure that the job has been soundly

done. As a publishing venture alone the translation would need to be backed by the authoritative opinion of scholars, and even a casual comparison with Andrew Lang's prose version reveals how well-equipped Mr. S. O. Andrew is for his giant task. Homer, as someone said, is no light matter, and here we have his epic rendered into something like 12,000 lines of English verse—a formidable undertaking triumphantly completed. As to the metre employed, Mr. Andrew uses a line of five stresses separated from each other by one or two unstressed syllables, with occasional variations, preferring this to the so-called English hexameter recommended by Matthew Arnold and to the traditional measure of English blank verse. He quotes Robert Bridges here: "If an English reader who is unable to read Greek is to get a glimpse of what Homer is like, he must read something which does *not* remind him of Milton or Pope or Tennyson, because Homer does not do this." Here is a specimen of the metre employed:

> "Then grey-eyed Athena thought of another design:
> She went through the town in the likeness of Telemachus
> And halting by all that she saw, had converse with them
> Bidding them meet at the harbour when evening was come;
> Moreover she craved of Nöemon, Phronius' son,
> A swift-going vessel, and gladly he lent it to her.
> And the sun went down and the ways were darkened on earth;
> Then haul'd she the ship to the sea, and stow'd in its waist
> All such tackle as bench'd ships carry in them,
> And moor'd at the harbour's mouth; and the company met
> On the beach, and Athena hail'd them cheering them on."

This seems to me to be an eminently successful narrative line, less monotonous than either the heroic couplet or the blank verse measure. I shall be surprised if Mr. Andrew's translation of the *Odyssey* fails to hold the field for many years to come.

I conclude with a report on two anthologies. *Spirit of Youth* an admirable children's collection illustrated with reproductions, famous pictures and sculptures, is "frankly an attempt, by very indirect means, to instil a broad Christian culture." The poetic passages quoted range from the Psalms through Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson, to the Edwardians, Georgians and neo-Georgians, including Sassoon, Yeats and T. S. Eliot. Several pages are devoted to commentary and in his Foreword Lord Wavell says, "to grow up with beauty in your minds and in your eyes is the best thing that can happen to you when young".

*Spirit of the Trees* is published appropriately by the Society of Men of the Trees and is certain of a wide welcome. It contains more than three hundred and fifty poems by two hundred and seventy poets. We have all been asked, "If you had to choose between flowers and trees how would you decide?" and most of us, I think, would vote to keep trees. But my readers must turn to Miss Sackville-West's Foreword for a felicitous essay on this cool and leafy theme.

# LILIAN BOWES LYON: COLLECTED POEMS

## DR. JOHN MURRAY

With Miss Bowes Lyon much happens, and in great variety. The reader is charmed, challenged, puzzled, moved, mystified and illuminated in turn or together. And let the worst be told. It may happen to him now and then to read a poem more than once over, to enjoy the atmosphere, the language, the seductive music, and to have a strong conviction of beauty, and yet not to be sure of the meaning. Miss Bowes Lyon, he may feel, and rightly, is not really addressing him.

More than most poets of the day she is reader—and reviewer—proof. Her whole concern is to shape vision and feeling to her liking. Of self-expression in the ordinary sense there is little, though much in the choice of themes and in the characteristically strong poetic response to them. Poets should certainly write on what stirs them most—or not at all. For difficulty and obscurity here and there Miss Bowes Lyon pays the penalty. Beyond certain limits compression, the temptation of strong minds, is a handicap. On the other hand the best and deepest things are not the easiest said or understood. The reader will note the brooding imaginative integration, a dainty embalming as it were, in which some themes are presented. Of the two ways of conveying a matter, by adding on detail to build a palpable whole, or by using an imaginative clue to organise items into artistic wholeness, the latter, the poet's way in the main, is emphatically Miss Bowes Lyon's. The very first poem in her *Collected Poems*, "Dedication", from *The White Hare*, 1934, has a grave charm of mixed fatefulness and delicate aspiration. It yields its secret in "good tidings of great sorrow" which is vow rather than fact, a vow only to be made good on the spiritual plane. In the light of the clue the poem takes strong hold of the reader. Most of the work does this, for readers who give it the chance. "A Woman Knitting," for instance, a beautiful poem, has a simple key: what woman knits is the generations, "casting on and casting off", and else she is a "vagrant spirit". Miss Bowes Lyon needs wary reading, and usually repays it. So do the "Odes of Horace" and very many other works of genius. Some of her poems indeed recall Horace by qualities of language and music and by a shining live solidity. But quite enough has been said about aspects of the work which may confuse or discourage readers. The point is that she makes heavy calls on the reader's imagination: and the more momentous the challenge, the simpler sometimes and the more unforced is the note, as in the last poem in her book, "Burning Leaves".

Miss Bowes Lyon has more versatility than she practises. On one hand the intensity of realisation which she throws into some themes, more or less lyrical, that scarcely afford room for it might serve better in broader

dramatic styles. "Evening in Stepney", her most significant work up to the present, points hopefully this way. She seeks in this poem to poetize suffering, and chooses it on the grand scale of World War II as she saw it in the East End of London, where overwork severely impaired her health. She poetises not for mere art's sake but as moral challenge, truly a bold and intimate aim, only to be reached on a spiritual plane, and most of us are shy of it, content to forget or endure. The adventure of a sensitive and unswerving imagination carries her to the confines of Faith. Amid infinite wreckage and pain, proof of how rankly evil can flourish, she follows whither the Spirit leads. Even at the worst "love dormant" is still for her the root of truth, and pain must be viewed as sacrament. "Evening in Stepney", with which she breaks new ground has analogues in Greek tragic choruses, and is an ode of great variety and rich movement, and of an almost overpowering intensity. It has faults: it is too novel and original, perhaps, for the poet to have mastered the mode fully as yet. Neither is it easy to read. But it yields to the reader who yields to its strange disturbing quality, and from "Could tears with tears confer" onward to the sharp impact in the last line

". . . A wound of light in the forehead of the blind,"

the poem grips.

The *Collected Poems* offer plentiful proofs of versatility. The animal poems, very intimate and revealing, render the beasts in the round, their bodies and souls. There are vivid touches, such as the "covetous-eyed cows" on the way to pasture, the old bull "slovenly great", the "patiently bold" sheepdog who "wills the moving reverie" of the sheep, the mare Duchess, driven early in the war by the poet in a Cotswold plough, who "leans to the work soberly, with love", the "hard-breathing huddle" of sheep in snow. The "Unusual Swan" has his swan-song sung for him, of glinting humour and funereal full-dress. Again, "Resurrection Bill", a sudden explosive stroke of fantasy, is perfect in its kind. "It was in the Winter" and "His Fur is on Fire" succeed in a rare vein of magic. Two short poems of cameo finish, "The Sleeper" and "Helen Meditates before her Portrait as a Woman," recall the Greek Anthology. "The Hermitage" compares easily with American work in that genre. "In Kensington Gardens" is very pleasing "reportage" about "antique laughter of children", "first lovers inarticulate in a wooden rapture", "high-brows playing a wordy ping-pong", etc.,

"To such pigmies the sweet day leaning from heaven
let down her shining hair."

No reader, I think, but will wish for more in these kinds.

Several of the poems are songs, and still more are songlike. In this age of disintegrative art and general disharmony, Miss Bowes Lyon is resolute for music and beauty. Of such poems are "Evening Sky", "The Feather," "North Wind," "Early Light," "Over the Fields," "Lodestar," "Pale Mistress," and "English Autumn, 1944". Here is the last-named:

"Happy unhappy October weather.
Out of the sky let nothing drop;
Only the rain or a rainbow feather,
Light in the air as hope.
Cool on the wind the curlews call you,
Weaving a wish, as Penelope wove
Her perpetual tapestry: Nothing befall you,
Love, my love, my love."

The last line, perhaps, is a rather conversational form of emphasis, though the poet inclines to it. Here is "Over the Fields", which goes deeper:

"Over the fields, the quiet fields of cattle,
Grave fields of home, exhaling a mist like incense,
Forgiving fields that suffer the keen plough-share,
How patiently over the fields
Night gathers.
And over the scarred ranges of the spirit,
The valleys of remorse and pale adventure,
The fields, the sorrowful acres of man's striving,
How tenderly over those furrows invisible
Night falls."

Song-writing may be counted as in the poet's lineage: an earlier namesake of her mother, Lady Anne Lindsay, was the author of "Auld Robin Gray".

A singing sincerity carries Miss Bowes Lyon far beyond the usual lyric range. During her stay at Oxford after World War I she studied philosophy, a taste that may have fostered the thrusts of thought to be felt in her work. She shirks no contrasts or clashes—on the contrary—or the problems that poets often avoid, not so much because they are poets as simply because they are human. "A Son"—the late-born child of a farm-labourer couple who is killed by a bomb—might easily have been different. It has restraint and dignity, and ends,

"The man looks bent; yet neither girds at God,"
"Remembering it was beautiful while it lasted."

"The Blind Tramp," which begins finely, "Her darkness fell before her day was done", a rhapsody of deprivation, ends finely too:

"She loves no landmark now, no singular tree,"
"And keeps no tryst with memory, none with hope,"
"Some covet life to lose it; some agree"
"With Christ at last, like dew the sun draws up."

Contrast, which the poet often uses pointedly, seems strained in "Stone Pity", but again is poignantly used in "Remembering the Adored".

There are poems in this book to delight nature-lovers. The poet's bearing harks back to Wordsworth. Nature is here variously reflected in felicities of phrasing and with a satisfying depth of feeling. It is tempting to cite, e.g. "the green hush of trees," "in black articulate winter," "the

hovering upland holy," "coastline soft with rain," "a brook that comforted the anxious lea," "the great reaches of dull silver, the cloudstains like bruises in bright flesh," of the sea, and, to come down to smaller things, "brook-fingered stones round with oblivion." "North Wind" and "Headland" in their brief compass convey powerfully the sense of wild winds and menacing sublimities. Fancy opens a deep window in "A dizzily hung field." "Early Light" gives a thrill. "Death in Summer" brings man and nature together: of Nature's mothering the poet has a strong sense, grim at times. But let the reader browse for himself. He will find plenty about Mother Earth and man's relations with her, and all rendered with direct and original feeling.

The reader's interest veers between the poetry and the poet: the poems are not only distinguished verse but reflect a very uncommon personality. In feeling for language, in musical building-up, in strokes of sheer eloquence, the technique rises not seldom to the superb. The artistic modesty is as notable as the finish. The poems, in their various keys, have the merit of youthful freshness as well as strong intelligence and grave tastes. The modesty can mislead: it almost veils the imaginative impact. By vivid veracity and the practice of brevity the poet challenges the reader on every page. She has weight, and is earnest, as only persons of vision can be. The earnestness is free from any didactic or combative taint. This is perhaps a Scotch quality, the prophetic strain, of which one is aware sometimes, for instance, in Burns, who seems as one reads an even greater man than artist. Here at any rate is a personality of rare quality and range, and richly expressive.

I quote one poem more, "Burning Leaves", an apologue of human life as burnt-offering. Its solemnising mood and redemptive serenity in the stress of crucial issues will be foolishness and a stumbling-block to some. Others will know how to value it.

## BURNING LEAVES

"Light me a candle, windless wood.
In fire we put the past to bed;
But from this rag-heap, smouldering still,
A spire of blue, a singular column
Straightly ascending proves your leaves,
Coined by the sun, my favourite dell,
Go further now they are dead.
The smoke has an astringent smell;
A dagger through the heart is good.
No stricken beech, no aspen grieves
For Time's brocade sublimely shed;
Yesterday's body burneth well.
Soul as I vanish, soul that weaves

A lasting green, bear out the solemn
Winter's tale I have understood.

Light me a candle, fan the whole
Black world to joy, my generous God."

# RUSSIAN VERSE: TRADITION AND REVOLUTION

*The Oxford Book of Russian Verse,* second edition, supplemented by D. P. Costello (12s. 6d.).

Reviewed by
GEORGE REAVEY

The first edition of *The Oxford Book of Russian Verse* was published in 1925. Edited by Maurice Baring, it contained selections from Russian poets beginning with Derzhavin (1743-1816) and ending in 1914 with Blok and Voloshin.

With the exception of the poem by Voloshin, Mr. Costello has left the original selections intact, but has supplemented them in two ways: firstly, by inserting some thirty extra pages of early Russian traditional poetry (anonymous); and secondly, by adding a number of leading poets of the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet periods up to 1939. The majority of these poets are transitional figures with their feet in both worlds: we are given only two minor examples of the work of the younger generation which began to dominate the scene after 1935.

The traditional poetry, which is sung in minstrel fashion, has had a long and troubled history of some thousand years—from the 9th to the 20th century. It flourished in the Kiev era, but preserved its vitality well into the 16th century, after which a gradual decline becomes apparent. For this the increased rigours of serfdom and 17th-century Tsarist edict against the bards or *skoromokhy* are mainly responsible. From then on the epics or *byliny* and the newer genre of historical poems treating of contemporary themes tend to be driven underground or rather into the freer and rebellious "cossack country" and the remoter regions of Lake Onega where, indeed, in the 1860's a political exile, P. N. Rybnikov, rediscovered the bards still active. The time-embroidered *byliny* treat mainly of the exploits of the heroes or *bogatyrs* of the Kiev period and of their resistance to the nomad raids by Polovtzy and Tartars. In the Stalinist period these legendary *bogatyrs*—Dobrynya, Olesha Popvoich and Ilya Muromets—were again made into popular figures and the *byliny* have been reprinted in large editions. The later historical poems often reflect contemporary events such as the execution of the rebel Stenka Razin in 1671 (No. II) and also serve

as a purge for the suppressed emotions of the serf population. Both genres contain passages of great lyrical purity, observation and, of course, nostalgia.

I am not here concerned with Maurice Baring's selections from the 19th-century poets, which are, indeed, excellent. But I feel less happy about the choice of 20th-century poets and poems. Mr. Costello has tried to fill certain gaps in the pre-Revolutionary phase and to cover some twenty years of Soviet poetry. I have no quarrel with any of the poets he has included—indeed, I am very glad to see poems by Khlebnikov and Biely and the addition of Blok's *The Scythians* (1918)—but in many cases I am doubtful about the choice of poems. I also find it strange that Mayakovsky is shown only in poems written in 1926 and after. I also fail to get the full savour of Mandelstam from the examples included. On the whole, the selection brings out the poets of the earlier Soviet period, such as Khlebnikov, Mayakovsky, Essenin, Pasternak, Mandelstam, Tikhonov and Bagritzky. It is to be hoped that the next edition will include poets at least up to 1946. I am also inclined to think that there might soon be room for two volumes; for if a separate volume were devoted to the 20th century, it would allow not only for added space to be given to the Soviet period, and so make it more varied, but also to that of the Symbolists, Futurists, and other pre-revolutionary poets, who contributed so much to the Russian poetic revival, which succeeded the age of the great Russian novel and which is not as adequately represented as it should.

## T. S. ELIOT IN PERSPECTIVE

*The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, an Essay on the Nature of Poetry*, by F. O. Matthiessen, (Oxford University Press, 18s.)

Reviewed by
G. S. FRASER

This is the only competent study of the whole of Mr. Eliot's work by a single hand. It is compact. It came out first in 1935, and with two new chapters, one on the plays, one on the quartets, it has less than two hundred pages. Yet it is readable, has an urbanity (generally mild, occasionally astringent) that springs from Dr. Matthiessen's respectful, detached attitude to his reader and his subject. He gives a clue to his tone in a remark he makes about Dr. Leavis, who "seems to be writing continually on the defensive as though he were the apostle of modern art to an unappreciative world". (It *is* an unappreciative world, Dr. Leavis might reply.) "As a result, his criticism, though eager, is somewhat wanting in balance and perspective."

Dr. Matthiessen has all the balance and perspective in the world, but a certain lack of eagerness, and a too bland assumption that his cause is won, are faults of his. His tone is suited to cajole the middle-aged into revising prejudices; less so to excite the young.

It is typical, for instance, of Dr. Matthiessen that he begins his book with a comparison of Mr. Eliot to Arnold. Arnold, of course, is an eminently respectable figure, and so, now, is Mr. Eliot. But there was a time when the youthful contributor to Wyndham Lewis's "Blast" was for many people a frightening and revolutionary figure, and when the late Arthur Waugh, in a stuttering attempt perhaps at a pun, denounced Eliot and Pound as "drunken helots". And there is a rippling muscular strength, a purring animal fierceness in Eliot's poetry to which nothing in Arnold's —so watery in texture, however admirable in sentiment—at all corresponds.

Dr. Matthiessen's book, in fact, has what one may call, not in a derogatory sense, an academic flavour. Mr. Eliot is a traditional poet, and a reviver of tradition; but he has been an innovator, and a disturbing innovator, too. The pages of this review in the past could bear witness to what cats he has let loose among what pigeons. He is launched, perhaps, a little too smoothly and without sufficient splash through Dr. Matthiessen's pages. Young readers, putting down the book, might be inclined to say, "Everything that Eliot did seems, by this account, to have been perfectly natural and proper. What was all the row about?"

These are trivial objections to a book which combines just broad views with subtle discriminations. Certainly, much that Dr. Matthiessen has to say about Eliot's background, his reading, his technique, his notion of tradition, his religious attitudes, however new in 1935, will not be new to readers now; but the matter is still presented in a more elegant and orderly fashion here than anywhere else.

Of the two new chapters, the better is that on the plays. I think *The Family Reunion* a more interesting, because a more ambitious play, than *Murder in the Cathedral,* but an interesting failure. Dr. Matthiessen suggests that its failure is of the same kind that Eliot himself detects in *Hamlet*: Eliot says that "Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem. Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops her and exceeds her". Eliot, like Shakespeare, seems, according to Dr. Matthiessen, to be "struggling with some 'intractable material that he could not bring to light'." Dr. Matthiessen's remarks on the conclusion of the play are an admirable example of his occasional acidity: "But when, in lieu of the traditional chariot of the *deus ex machina,* we have the highpowered car in which his faithful valet, after returning to pick up his Lordship's cigarette case, is to drive him away, the break between the surface of the play and the depth it is

meant to symbolise becomes ludicrous and irreparable. By no suspension of disbelief can we conceive how Harry, whose life seems to have been passed mainly in resorts and luxury hotels, can undergo the discipline of suffering in any broadly meaningful sense".

In dealing with the quartets, in a short chapter, Dr. Matthiessen seems more concerned with their musical structure, its repetitions and variations, than with their content, which demands, as he admits, a "detailed analysis" for which he has not space. "Essential evil", he notes however, "still constitutes more of Eliot's subject matter than essential good, but the magnificent orchestration of his themes has prepared for that paradisal glimpse at the close, and thereby makes it no decorative allusion, but an integrated climax to the content no less than the form". This is summary but just. Dr. Matthiessen's special gift as a critic is perhaps for summarising a general appreciation.

There would be a place for a book on Mr. Eliot containing more detailed analysis of particular poems and for one by a poet rather than a professor—the book promised by the American poet, Delmore Schwarz, may fill this bill—making more allowance for the irrational element in poetry: for Eliot's power as a poet springs from something far deeper than his conscious attitude to life. A poet like Delmore Schwarz might make us more vividly aware of that fact, than Dr. Matthiessen does. As a rounded general study of the most influential poet of our age, his book, however, is excellent and is hardly likely to be superseded.

## VERNON WATKINS AND HIS BALLAD

PETER RUSSELL

It seems strange that Mr. Vernon Watkins' poetry is not better known —it is accomplished, exciting, and shows an individuality which will be apparent to most readers of poetry. The first and most obvious characteristic of this poet is the fact that he is a Welshman, and in his writing at any rate, a very "Welsh" Welshman. Like most of his countrymen he can "sing", and the poems in this book, which are most successful are essentially songs or ballads. The beautiful autobiographical poem that opens the collection—"The Collier"—shows this quality at its best:

> " When I was born on Amman Hill
> A dark bird crossed the sun.
> Sharp on the floor the shadow fell;
> I was the youngest son."

and later

"I learnt the valley flowers' names
And the rough bark knew my knees.
I brought home trout from the river
And spotted eggs from the trees",

while the long ballad at the end of the book is something of a *tour de force* in modern narrative or ballad writing. In the more delicately woven "Sycamore" we read

"Centuries made me firm
For I have spread my roots.
I grip the flying stream.
Aching I drop my fruits".

and one returns again and again to such gracious writing.

The poems which are not of this song-like genus are less successful, if on the whole more solid and thoughtful. He has evidently been a slow developer and the greatly increased felicity of his subsequent work, especially in the three fine long poems in *The Lamp and the Veil*, Faber, 1945, will bear this out. The influence of Dylan Thomas is very much to the fore in certain of the shorter poems and at times is undigested and clumsily employed.

"The room of pity marked with murder's cross,
Danced in the world of reawakened tears
Sprung from grief's heart, emblems of utter loss . . . "

is a poor start for so talented a poet, while the earlier sonnet "Pit Boy" appears immature and uncertain. But it is from W. B. Yeats that Mr. Watkins seems to have derived most. The Elegy on the "Heroine of Childhood", "Yeats' Tower", "A Prayer against Time" and "A Lover's Words" all show this influence to a marked degree, but this one stanza from "Prime Colours" will demonstrate it most effectively:

"One man may count with imitative hooves,
The huge, high landscape that another loves,
Empound the apocalypse till truth is pent
To satisfy the turnstiles of a tent."

It would be expecting too much to look for an advance on the great Irishman's style, but though the influence is better absorbed than that of Dylan Thomas it remains an obvious influence, present at times, absent at times, and it is only in the later book that Mr. Watkins has really begun to rise above these influences.

There is a strain of the metaphysician in some of the poems, notably "Old Triton Time" and "Empty Hands", and these make attractive reading, but apart from the song- or ballad-like poems the most interesting are the powerful poem on the shooting of Franz Werfel, the "Discoveries" —an effective summary of the poet's literary interests, in rhyming couplets, which illustrate as well as anything in the book the peculiar style that the reader soon recognises as "Vernon Watkins", and a four-page poem

"After Sunset". In the latter he seems to recreate scenes from literary history in short certain brush-strokes and to link the whole into a deeply-moving evening reverie.

"We pushed keels from dark shores
Storm-red the sky.
Harpies calling the sailors
Strewed on the winds their cry."

Lines like these call up with great clarity the reader's literary memories.

These shorter poems tell the story of the formation of one of the most interesting poets who have become widely known since the outbreak of the war, while the long poem marks his first large achievement, in what appears to be the form most congenial to his gifts—the longer poem. For nearly twenty pages the poet holds our attention with a dynamic rhythm and a startling imagery, and considering that the dramatic power of the poem depends largely on the atmosphere depicted rather than any actual dramatic movement, that is to pay a high compliment to the poetry itself.

The story centres round an ancient custom by which a party of singers and improvisers, on the pretext of blessing, visited houses with a horse's head modelled in wood painted and hung with ribbons, on New Year's Eve. They tried to gain entrance to the house for the sake of food and drink by means of a rhyming contest with the occupants, who it seems, were honour-bound to admit them when they themselves failed in a rhyme. The poet in his childhood visualised the horse's head or *Mari Lwyd*—to be precise *Grey Mare*—as a skull, and the poem attempts to bring together the living and the dead, symbolised respectively by the occupants and the visitants, at the hour of midnight—"the moment of supreme forgiveness, confusion and understanding, the profane and sacred moment impossible to realise when the clock-hands divide the Living from the Dead." The metaphysical idea of the struggle between life and death is very incompletely worked out, while the actual symbolism of the poem is likewise confused, the spread table rather inadequately representing the Bread and Wine of the Christian Communion, but the continual tension and the at times horrific atmosphere compensates for such imperfections.

The insistent beat of the repeated lines:

"Midnight. Midnight. Midnight. Midnight.
Hark at the hands of the clock",

and this stanza, describing the occupants' belief that the visiting dead are leaving, gives an idea of the style of writing.

"Hark, they are going; the footsteps shrink,
And the sea renews her cry.
The big stars stare and the small stars wink;
The Plough goes glittering by.
It was a trick of the turning tide
That brought those voices near.

Dead men pummelled the panes outside
We caught the breath of the year."

It is a poem of fear, of nightmare, of death; and where it fails at times in dramatic content, in its inconclusive end (most nightmares are inconclusive), and in occasional lapses in versification, it will always startle and carry us over the gaps without difficulty. Plainly written for performance on a darkened stage these defects would be minimised by the power of the poetry in the spoken voice, and it is a genre which should be more cultivated in a literature like English, with its great ballad tradition. The reader will not fail to return to it time and again once he has read it, and I recommend it to all interested in true poetry.

## SHAKESPEARIAN EMENDATIONS—No. 8

HOWARD PARSONS

In *As You Like It*, IV.3.101, Oliver says Orlando was—

Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy.

which means he was thinking (alternately) hopefully and pessimistically of love.

Irving printed "cud" without comment, while the Cambridge, Warwick and White make the same omission regarding "food." Cowden Clarke wrote "Many have believed 'food' to be misprint for 'cud.' " Staunton said "Undoubtedly a misprint. To chew the cud, is an expression of frequent occurrence in our old authors," but that is a good reason against his own decision: Shakespeare did not like second-hand phrases. Knight printed "food" but said that with a little more encouragement he would have changed to "cud."

Considering that the phrase "*food* for thought" or its equivalent was in use before Shakespeare was born, there seems no reason whatever for questioning the Folio text regarding this line, even though "chewing the cud," also, is of long standing, for chewing is as necessary for food as for cud. I refer to the phrase used in 1538 by Starkey "Nourished with the spiritual food of his celestial word."—though it is spelt somewhat differently! — Nuryshyd wyth the spiritual fode of hys celestyal word." (N.E.D.) This "fode" like that mentioned by Shakespeare had to be turned over in the mind after its reception, so the meaning of the two phrases is identical, thus proving the Folio line to be correct.

IV.3.121. Celia says—

O, I have heard him speake of that same brother,
And he did render him the most unnaturall
That *liv'd amongst* men.
OLI. And well he might so doe,

The two hemistichs combine into a perfect line if "amongst" is beheaded. Accordingly, Cowden Clarke, Staunton, Knight and Irving do so, but Jagger and the Warwick follow the Folio, while the Cambridge gives the line a foot too many, by dividing "lived" into two syllables although it is usually monosyllabic in the Folio, and definitely so in the present instance, because of the omission of "e." There are plenty of precedents for "mongst", e.g., Two Gentlemen of Verona, V.4.72.

O time most accurst,
'mongst all foes that a friend should be the worst!

so I submit they should be followed in the above.

V.4.116. As per Folio—

Duk. *If there be truth* in sight, you are my daughter.
Orl. *If there be truth* in sight, you are my Rosalind.
Phe. If sight and shape be true, why then my love adieu.
Ros. Ile have no Father, if you be not he:
I'le have no husband, if you be not he:
Nor ne're wed woman, if you be not shee.
Hymen. Peace hoa: I barre confusion,
'Tis I must make conclusion,
Of these most strange events:
Here's eight that must take hands,
To joyne in Hymens bands,
*If truth* holds true contents.

Halliwell-Phillips said of the last line "that is, if there be truth in truth; unless it change its nature and becomes false." But this "truth" like the other two in the passage, is used in a preamble leading to a definite conclusion. So let the preamble take the lead, thus—

If truth holds true contents,
Here's eight that must take hands
To joyne in Hymens bands.

It is now clear that the third of the "If truths" sum up what is to be the result of the proceedings. But I submit a slight emendation is needed: that "contents" should be "consents." The said three lines then mean "If the truth is that four maidens have truly consented to be married and each promise "holds," then "Here's eight that must take hands to joyne in Hymens bands."

Cowden Clarke defined the line as "If truth contain truth," but a thing or quality cannot contain itself. He offers alternately "If there be truth in truth" but that is unquestionable. It is now obvious that I do not share the Cambridge's view that "The only point of this feeble line ("If truth holds true contents") seems to be that it provides a rhyme for "events." The Warwick, likewise, mentions the "feebleness" of the above lines, but my emendation, by reverting to Shakespeare's word "consents," has restored their strength.

V.4.134.—

Whiles a Wedlocke Hymne we sing,
Feede your selves with questioning:
That *reason*, wonder may diminish
How thus we met, and these things finish.

This advice was given to the "eight that must take hands, To join in Hymen's bands"; the four couples all being about to wed under strange circumstances. The Warwick, Staunton, Jagger, the Cambridge, White and Knight all pass "reason" without comment, but I advance "reasons" as Shakespeare's word. Cowden Clarke notes that "questioning" means interchanging enquiry." Each enquiry would have received a reply, a "reason," so the plural "reasons" is the required word. With each reason wonder diminished.

It is widely accepted that in human affairs the heart rules the head, hence, sentiment and reason are in opposition: reason is the mental process by means of which all abstruse problems that have been solved were overcome, therefore, the wedding festivities were no time for reason. "Reasons" means "explanations" and was used here as it was earlier in the play, "Lame me with reasons." "Wonder" means "perplexity" and Phebe, for one, must have had it in full measure, though Orlando and the Duke had their share. It was to ease the confusion caused by her activities while in disguise, that Roslaind arranged that Hymen should encourage questions so that the replies (reasons) should ensure the perplexities would not have to be solved by reason; that worries of the head should not interfere with the exhilaration of the heart.

The Cambridge, page 163, says "There is no dramatic necessity for this masque-business," which it regards as "a non-Shakespearian interpolation." But may not the success of the earlier masque (Pyramus and Thisby, in Midsummer Night's Dream) have encouraged the author to write this one, about two years later? Having created a precedent a second was to be expected. It contains a good reason for its own existence, viz., to "barre confusion" arising from "these most strange events," of which Hymen says he "must make conclusion." The play would have appeared unfinished if Shakespeare had not freed his characters from their entanglements.

Rosalind had said she was a magician (V.2.68), having conversed with a magician since she was three years old (V.2.57) and V.4.30, Orlando says "this boy" (the disguised Rosalind)—reports his uncle to be a great magician," but I submit he was invented by Rosalind to obtain credence for the supernatural powers she claimed. So, although the Cambridge had been led to anticipate a magician, it was, if my theory is correct, doomed to disappointment, and as an item in the plot, it was more satisfactory that Rosalind should be permitted to perform the feat, as otherwise, the powers she had arrogated to herself would have been

put to no purpose and there would have been no motive in her acquiring them.

The Cambridge mentions the "obscurity and tortuousness of the couplets" as a reason for its theory that the masque is an interpolation, but I hope my emendations have removed both those objections.

V.4.145, the Duke says to Celia—

O my deere Neece, welcome thou art to me
Even daughter welcome in no lesse degree.

White, Staunton and Knight all pass the lower line without comment. The Cambridge comments "how obscure and tortuous the language is!" Cowden Clarke said it means "I may even call you daughter, for no less welcome art thou than a daughter." The Warwick informs us that "Even daughter" means "my daughter equally with Rosalind."

I submit that EVEN has been printed in error for THAN. Once that is admitted, the natural order of the words is apparent, viz., Welcome in no less degree than daughter. It was an easy mistake to make, for each word has four letters and both end in "n." That it was not shortened to "e'en" to maintain rhythm is strong evidence against "even" being the right word.

I.1.105, we read that, on Charles' testimony, Rosalind is "*no less* beloved of her uncle *than* his own *daughter*. The line we are considering is a remarkable duplicate of that statement. Let us superimpose the one on the other—

no less beloved of her uncle than his own daughter.
Welcome, in no less degree *than* daughter.

"no less than daughter" appears in both lines and would have been in the same order in the lower line as in the upper, had it not been for the necessities of rhyme and rhythm. Each line states the uncle's affection for his niece is not less than it is for his daughter: the upper line refers to the new duke and Rosalind and the lower line to the old duke and Celia. Word for word, the paraphrase is perfect, providing "even" is changed to "than." Further, "no less beloved" is balanced by "in no less degree welcome"; "of her uncle" is mentioned in the one case and is understood in the other, and "than his own daughter," spoken by Charles, is paralleled by "than daughter" as spoken by the uncle, with "my own" inserted tacitly. Thus, the emendation proposed is justified.

# SHORTER REVIEWS

*The Incomparable Aphra.* George Woodcock. (T. V. Boardman. 12s. 6d.)

There is an argument for Aphra Behn being not only our first woman of letters—in the serious sense of writing for money—but also the first to "speak out" as a woman. English women before the Restoration had maintained a polite reserve.

Aphra Behn was the first to tell us about the tension between the sexes from "the other side of the hill", to tell us how women can love us without liking us. In the average Caroline lyric there seems to be no convention of two persons talking, one perhaps pleading; the other rebutting. There is no duel: the whole action takes place within the person who is represented as speaking. For Aphra Behn—there is a duel. In her :

> Love in fantastique Triumph satt,
> Whilst Bleeding hearts about him flow'd

"Love" is the destructive force. It is the woman who will suffer most by loving beyond hope.

> Thus thou and I the God have arm'd,
> And set him up a Deity;
> But my poor heart alone is harmed,
> Whilst thine the victor is and free.

The word "fantastique" means, I think, "grotesque", a loss of womanly dignity has been involved. As her contemporary "Ephelia" complains :

> I love, and know not why
> Since 'tis decreed in the dark book of Fate,
> That I should love, and he should be ingrate.

Mr. Woodcock's readable book is more concerned with Aphra's life than with her poetry. Mr. Woodcock in his prose is sometimes more derelict than Beachcomber: ". . . no real reason to suppose, at the most, more than one or more formal interviews between Aphra and the King". (p. 30.) "In 1668 Abraham Cowley had published a long poem in Latin, *Sex Libri Plantorum* . . . " (p. 210). This was rather a feat. "The Muses' Hannibal" had to scale the Alps of death. He died in 1667. No one wants to be fussy about this kind of thing, but it doesn't increase confidence in Mr. Woodcock's larger statements.

What *The Incomparable Aphra* does do is to engage our sympathies firmly with a spirited and generous, a talented and tragic woman. Aphra had bad luck as a spy on the Continent and worse when she fell in love with John Hoyle. Beside her lively plays she wrote novels full of liberal sentiment about the horrors of slavery, the joys of female emancipation. Her appeal to the modern mind should be irresistible.

IAIN FLETCHER.

*Lean Forward Spring!* Poems by Phoebe Hesketh (Sidgwick & Jackson, 7s. 6d).

Phoebe Hesketh is no stranger to *The Poetry Review* to which she has been a frequent contributor, winning the Greenwood Prize for her poem "Ploughing" which is included in this volume. She is a poet evidently well read both in the ancient and the modern masters of her art, whose shadowy fingers have lent their aid to many a stanza, many a lyric theme. This is not to say that Mrs. Hesketh is guilty of plagiarism; on the contrary, her verse is singularly original, but it possesses a stringency of form in which we recognise now a resemblance to the metaphysical poets—as in the elegant "To a Skylark", now to Elizabeth Barrett Browning—see "The Pedlar"; now to Osbert Sitwell, in her "Walter Woppitt"; and not least to Robert Bridges in that most exquisite illumination "Snow". This last poem has that final simplicity and tenseness of vision which is the mark of inspiration: effortless it drops into its neat mould.

As in every collection of verse the reader will find occasionally a poem which to his mind is beneath the standard of the majority, a few lines which jar upon his critical sense. "Born bright and blue from out an age of cloud . . . " "A swallow springs from out the firmament . . . " The phrase "from out" is unacceptable and that it should occur twice in one poem is unfortunate.

On the whole however this is a most commendable volume. In her final poem "Epilogue" Mrs. Hesketh proves that she is a poet not only of art but of intellect. She displays her philosophy is some dozen lines—a difficult achievement—and with success.

JEAN KENWARD.

*The Mirror.* Poems by Leonard Clark (Allan Wingate, 6s.)

The impression left upon the mind by these poems is one of Apocalyptic vision and consequent despair. Mr. Clark holds forth with prophetic eloquence, and suitable abandon. At times his work might suggest that the imagination is a little out of hand and that greater discipline would encourage lucidity. The poem "Renaissance" shows that the author does not lack technical prowess, which, mated to his own intense feeling has resulted in a most lovely lyric. It is a pity that his most metaphysical poems are not similarly strengthened.

Here and there we find an affinity to Blake, as in "Revelation", a dignified and gracious verse in which Mr. Clark uncovers his awareness of social misery. He has the poet's accentuated comprehension of suffering

combined with an absorbing terror that can only be the result of experience. Such lines as

"The sea was there, delivered up to fire,
So terrified it could not lose its dead . . ."

"And then I hammered nails
Into the shrieking trees . . ."

extracts as they are, show the hue of Mr. Clark's imagination. Is he aware of his obsession with the grotesque, the terrible? Certainly. Beneath it lies the seer's longing for the co-operation of humanity to avoid such tragedies as appear to be inevitable.

It is when he escapes from the premonition of despair that Mr. Clark sings most freely. Perhaps most typical and lovely of his more hopeful poems is "To His Heart". Here is the last stanza:

"Sing of the night, the silver night,
The subtle moon's interpreter,
And be no more an anchorite,
Or silent prisoner."

JEAN KENWARD.

*Collected Poems* by Robert P. Tristram Coffin. (The Macmillan Co., New York).

This generous book of some 450 pages is undoubtedly much welcomed by Mr. Coffin's many admirers. Mr. Coffin is a poet from Brunswick, Maine, born in 1892. He tells us that the little red schoolhouse prepared him for his education at Princeton and Oxford Universities (where he was a Rhodes Scholar). His war service in War I led him to teaching and travelling outside his native state of Maine. Besides being a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Mr. Coffin has been chosen a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Some thirty-three books carry his signature including prose as well as poetry. The book contains sagas of his countryside and country-folk.

Looking through this lengthy volume the reviewer wishes to give something of his and I choose—

THE COLLEGE OF CAPTAINS

Alexander on the march
Brought his legs up stiff as starch,
Hannibal and John Paul Jones
Had springs inside their marrowbones,
Cromwell hunted Charles the King
With top-knot high as anything,

And when Great Pompey ruled the flood
His eyes were full of specks of blood.

All great captains are drilled well
In the College of Daun Cockerel.
Where they learn to lift their soles
As if they walked on living coals,
Learn to thrust their chests out broad
As if they marched alone with God,
Learn to go as if the wheels
That move the stars were in their heels.

Mr. Coffin has prefaced his book with lengthy expression of his position toward poetry. We will agree with him that "Poetry is the best arrangement of the finest thoughts".

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

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## THE STROUD ANTHOLOGY

The Stroud Poetry Society is to be congratulated on its publication of a delightful little volume of poems, "Stroud Anthology, 1948" which is now on sale at 2s. 6d. This volume with its attractive pen-and-ink cover sketch by Daphne Allen of a typical Cotswold scene, should command a ready sale in Stroud and district, not only because of its local associations but because of its appeal so well described by Herbert Palmer in his Foreword. He writes:

> "Several of these poems have really spoken to me . . . It is likely that two or three of these poets will some day make a reputation. But that is really nothing; the main thing is that the poem should give more than intellectual pleasure to the writer of it, and after that to a few friends and sympathisers . . . I believe that Stroud and the Cotswold neighbourhood is a nest of singing birds. I shall always remember with intense pleasure the appreciative audience when I read some of my own poems at Stroud. Blessings on this little book!"

The list of contributors to the volume is indicative of the fine response of local poets to the Society's first call for what we hope will become an annual Stroud Anthology. These contributors include the following: M. G. Bell, Andrew Keith, Arthur Ball, Edgar Proudman, K. Cockett, Gerald Lawrence, Enid Jackman, Marjorie Martin, Noel Sydney-Smith, K. A. M. Wehner, Laetitia Withall, Margaret von Hodenberg.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Whereas all great poets have been masters of rhyme, and did not dispense with its use until, in the plenitude of their power, they rightly felt their imaginations could produce pictures that did not need to be framed in rhyme before they would give pleasure, it seems that many would-be poets find rhyme too much for them, so make futile efforts to dispense with it.

Rhyme is the harmonious accompaniment to metrical song, and as it is few who have voices so sweet that the pleasure of hearing them sing is not enhanced by the accompaniment, so, rarely does a blank verse poem give as much pleasure as one in rhyme. The former is usually an example of "a fair divided excellence whose fullness of perfection" lay in the rhyme which was denied it, and so it fails to gratify. As in the passage from which I have just quoted, there is majesty in heroic verse beyond the power of rhyme, but as it is attained only by the kings of the craft, this is a plea for the printing of less of it that fails to reach high excellence.

I am, etc.,

HOWARD PARSONS.

Sir,

The barrenness in literature, and all the arts, is, I believe, the direct aftermath of the industrial revolution, which has given us great Scientific Progress but little or no Moral Development. So that mechanization was mistaken for civilization, and all culture, religion and ethics were pushed into the background to an extent that helped to bring about the disasters in this century.

It is said that artists, of all kinds, usually represent their age; but the works of this century show mainly a glut of isms, both introspective and escapist.

Caused by the creative artists attempts to free himself, by separating himself from society instead of fitting himself into it.

Also, artists are credited with not only reflecting their age, but of elevating it; and no doubt the general confusion and lack of faith in this first half century has been well represented by them, but do they (or will they), elevate it?

Odd small voices have clung to the greater progressive ideals of the arts, but generally the roll has been a chaotic bohemianism, so that now we are faced with the need for an artistic rehabilitation.

For in this age of economic awareness and communal responsibilities

the artist can no longer separate himself, and must recognise, and meet his social obligations before he can preach any new gospel of cultural enlightenment. Because, if he is not considerate of the people, they, the public (his public) in this age of utility and realism will have no consideration for him, until he is even further isolated and drifts into an even greater introspective escapism, and surpasses the "moderns" in their negation by arriving at complete self annihilation.

I am, etc.,

F. Glazby.

Sir,

If you have the space, I should like to respond to Mr. Stanford's reply to my letter discussing his T. S. Eliot article. My letter was written on the invitation of the Editor at the time, who thought that, together with Mr. Stanford's reply, it might perhaps start a useful discussion. I regret, therefore, that Mr. Stanford has narrowed the issue by interpreting my letter as a censure of his criticism. Censure seems an ugly idea, presumptuous, pontifical, and also irrelevant; for it was not on the merits of Mr. Stanford's criticism, but on the significance of Mr. Eliot's poetry that I had wished to put the emphasis. There was, therefore, no need for Mr. Stanford to defend his position as a critic, though he does so most ably. It is important, I think, to make this clear, for discussion can only be obscured and its level lowered, if we introduce personal censures. I should say, too, that I did not censure Mr. Stanford for the arbitrary nature of his critical statements in general, but contested one point of his on which I found his judgment arbitrary; and, of course, I did not say, or suggest, that his article was "totally irrelevant".

Certainly, if in the sentence: "In this, then, (the strategy) resides the importance of Eliot for his contemporaries and all who follow after" Mr. Stanford substitutes "colleagues" for "contemporaries and all who follow after" he limits the scope and significance of his statement. But this is a major concession and Mr. Stanford can hardly suggest that my failure to read something he did not, in fact, write was a failure of understanding. It had occurred to me that Mr. Stanford did not really mean what he had written, yet even so, this did not alter my opinion. For although fellow poets are naturally more interested in Eliot's technique than are the "casual and serious verse-readers" (do casual verse-readers ever turn to Eliot, by the way?) they are not a class apart; they are not merely specialists and technicians, but part of the whole community of mankind Eliot addresses; further, because of the rôle they play in society, it is essential that they, above all, should be wary of losing touch with their audience by becoming too exclusively concerned with technique; they, above all, should concern themselves with something more, with the other significant attributes of poetry. Even when addressing an

audience of "younger poets", perhaps I should say, *especially* when addressing them, I should still make Eliot's technique—important as it is—subordinate to what he has to say. And here I differ not only with Mr. Stanford but with many other critics of authority.

It is important here to say that I am not trying to preach Mr. Eliot's religious belief for him; I do not even share his belief. It is not the belief itself that matters, but the attitude to life that engenders that belief. An attitude expressed, in one of its forms, in the lines I deliberately quoted, and which I will quote again:

> "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
> Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless"

an attitude which transcends the various divisions of religious belief. In seeing only the belief itself and disregarding the attitude to life that underlies it, those who reject Eliot on the grounds of his Anglo-Catholicism are, perhaps, merely exposing the superficiality of their own judgment.

Mallarmé's celebrated mot expressed the particular view of a school of poetry—and a most sectional school. It was used to express a deliberately extreme view and was one of those crusading aphorisms which make their point by seeming to flout a generally accepted idea. Employed as such, it was incisive in effect. In the hands of the less astute, however, who would seek to use it to lay down a rule for poetry in general, it loses its sharp edge and its sense. Poems are indeed written with words and because they are written with words they convey ideas, the transmission of ideas being the origin and purpose of all language. And even in the particular use of language we know as poetry, the idea must precede the word—unless, of course, the poem is to be mere words. Some of the dullest poetry of recent years has been written by those who, lacking Eliot's conviction, most inappropriately employed his technique and the dreary Eliotese that resulted ensued precisely because, like Mr. Stanford, these poets had read Eliot's significance in his technique, not in his attitude to life. It is not the technical strategy that is of prime importance but the attitude to life, to convey which a particular technique must be forged. This attitude determines the strategy, after which process the two, content and strategy, become welded together and are hardly separable again.

It is possible, as I have noticed since reading Mr. Stanford's article, to quote Eliot to support both Mr. Stanford's view and my own, just as it is possible to "prove" the most conflicting theories on life by judicious selection from Shakespeare and the Bible. However, since Mr. Stanford does so to support his view, I, too, will risk quoting Mr. Eliot to support mine. In a lecture on D. H. Lawrence he said:

> "This speaks to me of that at which I have long aimed, in writing poetry; to write poetry which should be essentially poetry, with nothing poetic about it, poetry standing naked in its bare bones, or

> poetry so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poem *points at*, and not on the poetry, this seems to me the thing to try for. To get *beyond poetry*, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get *beyond music* . . . ' (The italics are Eliot's own.)

This, together with what he wrote when discussing Ezra Pound's method in "Personae":

> "It is merely a question of the means suited to the particular poet, and we are more concerned with the end than with the means".

is sufficient to show that Eliot, too, regards technique as a means inferior in importance to the end, and that he has tried to get beyond something that is merely poetry.

Mr. Stanford could not have chosen a less appropriate poet than Tennyson to show how the "intellectual authenticity" of a poet's work may lose interest for later generations, for the main flaw in Tennyson's poetry is its weakness of intellectual authenticity, its lack of that "fundamental brainwork" that Mr. Stanford finds so strong in Eliot's poetry. Tennyson was too ready to substitute for "intellectual authenticity" the mere sentiment of his time and it is this sentiment that has grown stale, that never was a proper substitute, and that never was likely to survive scrutiny for long. Far from supporting Mr. Stanford's contention, the case of Tennyson seems rather to show that a brilliant technique is insufficient compensation for poverty of content. He achieved that "verbal authenticity" in which Mr. Stanford suggests the "time-resisting quality" of poetry resides, but it has availed him little. And Mr. Stanford cannot seriously wish to have us believe that the "theological content" of "In Memoriam" is at all comparable with the belief expressed in Eliot's poetry any more than he would seriously claim that the ideas in which "The Four Quartets", for instance, were "born" have anything to do with "the climate of ephemeral fashion". Yet, if his last paragraph is to be taken as relevant to my argument, is meant to oppose my opinion that it is what Eliot "points at" that matters most of all, to readers and to poets, then it must also be taken as implying this.

I would suggest that the "time-resisting quality" of poetry lies neither in "intellectual" nor "verbal authenticity" but in the more or less magical combination of *several* elements of a poem, the most important of which is not "verbal authenticity" but truth to what Eliot has called the "permanent in human nature". Mr. Stanford's last paragraph brings us, however, to general arguments on the nature of poetry and on this subject there are probably as many opinions as there are readers of poetry—and room for us all to differ.

I am, etc.,

JAMES BROCKWAY.

Sir,

I hope you will accept a few words from me about Dr. Alex Comfort's review of John Waller's "The Kiss of Stars" in your last number. This appears to me the work of a reviewer who hasn't the slightest idea of what Waller is doing or trying to do. One thing is certain: Waller is not trying to write the poems Dr. Comfort writes or likes. Unlike so many poets of his period, he has had the good sense to cut clean away from contemporary politics and philosophy. His world is a permanent and not an ephemeral world. It may be peopled by lovers, soldiers, actors, all those he once described in an earlier volume as "the lonely, the lovely, the shy and the bold" but it is a genuine living world.

Dr. Comfort describes Waller as having brought home that kind of poeticism which "we used to call Georgianism". He should have consulted with some Georgian poets—who on the whole do not like Waller—before writing such rubbish. He might just as ridiculously have labelled Auden as writing like Tennyson.

John Waller is, I should imagine from his work, a hedonist. Thank God, I say, for a little emotive poetry in a land of cold Comfort fertilised by Fuller's earth where one can no longer see the stars for the Treece!"

I am, etc.,

ALAN ARNOLD.

Sir,

In his Biographical Preface to the Globe Edition of the Works of Robert Burns, Alexander Smith wrote: "To the blood of the Burneses a love of knowledge was native as valour, in the old time, to the blood of the Douglasses", and there is abundant evidence from various sources in support of this statement.

The question arises, however, and it is one which has never been fully discussed, from what source the family of Burnes (as the name was spelt in the North of Scotland) derived this love of knowledge?

To this question the most reasonable answer would appear to be that it had its origin in the manners and customs of the County Families of the County of Kincardine, and, most particularly in those of the family of Keith, Earls Marischal of Scotland.

The Keiths belonged originally to East Lothian, but, after particularly distinguished services in the Wars of Independence had been at Dunottar since the end of the fourteenth century.

They had estates in various other parts of Scotland, and at one time were reputed to be the wealthiest family in that kingdom.

It was said of William, the Fourth Earl, who died in 1581, that he could travel from Berwick to John o' Groats, breakfast and dine every day and sup and sleep every night on his own property.

Himself a man of moderate views, he became so tired of the ceaseless dissensions in the Scottish capital that he shut himself up in Dunottar and devoted himself to study, leaving his son to attend to the family affairs. From this he was called "William of the Tower".

George, the Fifth Earl, has been described as one of the few thoroughly cultured noblemen of his time.

For years he studied at King's College, Aberdeen, and on the continent, principally at Geneva, and, in 1594, founded at Aberdeen the famous Marischal College.

His successor subscribed The Solemn League and Covenant, but none the less, remained to the end a staunch royalist.

The last Earl, then a young man in his early twenties, forfeited his estates through taking part, along with his brother, aged nineteen, in the rebellion of 1715.

It may not be unprofitable to glance at the continental record of these two men.

George, the elder, entered the service of Frederick the Great of Prussia, whose trusted friend and confidant he became.

He was noted for his eccentricities, the simplicity of his manners and his warm and generous disposition.

A prominent man of the day wrote of him: "He has a conscience that would gild the inside of a dungeon".

On one occasion, in regard to a diplomatic matter, he did a service so valuable to the British Crown that he was given permission to return to the United Kingdom, and awarded a cash sum in lieu of his forfeited estates.

He returned to Scotland with the intention of settling there, but received so earnest a request from Frederick to return to Germany that he finally consented to do so, and enjoyed until his death in 1778 the king's friendship and esteem.

On one occasion he had an interview with Jean Jacques Rousseau of which the philosopher wrote in his "Confessions", "When first I beheld this venerable man, my first feeling was to grieve over his sunken and wasted frame, but when I raised my eyes on his noble features, I was struck with admiration".

His brother, James Francis Edward, commonly called, Marshall Keith, after studying two years in Paris where he made special progress in mathematics and became a member of the Academie des Sciences, served first in Russia and then under Frederick the Great. During the Seven Years' War he was mortally wounded in leading a charge against the Austrians.

It has been written of him that as a soldier he was beyond question by far the greatest of all "Scots abroad".

When in Russia he was made Governor of the Ukraine, and in a single year of his wise and humane administration made the inhabitants com-

plain that he should either never have been appointed, or this having been done, he should never have been recalled.

Much could be written of other Kincardineshire families: of the famous Quaker family of Barclay, the founder of which, Colonel David Barclay, obtained the estate of Ury by purchase from the Earl Marischal in 1647: of the Burnets of Leys to which family belonged Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, who played a prominent part in the revolution of 1689 and wrote a spirited "History of His Own Times", and also Lord Monboddo, Scottish judge, author and scholar, who is remembered as a friend of Doctor Samuel Johnson.

From close to the ancestral home of the Burnet's came too a second Bishop of Salisbury, Bishop Douglas.

In the opinion of Lord Clarendon, the ablest soldier in the Scottish army of the Covenant was General Middleton, who came from the southern part of the County, and in addition to his military qualities showed a geniality which won him the favour of the "Merry Monarch" who, on his return from exile, raised him to the peerage.

From a purely literary point of view, however, the most distinguished native of Kincardine was Doctor John Arbuthnot, court physician to Queen Anne and intimate friend and adviser of all the wits of that period. "The Doctor", says Swift, "has more wit than we all have and his humanity is equal to his wit".

Such seems to have been the general opinion.

No doubt, Kincardine owed much to its geographical position, as it was off the main route of marching armies and under the firm rule of enlightened overlords it was spared the bitter feuds which raged in so many districts of Scotland.

Should not students of the life and works of Robert Burns commence their studies at a much earlier historical period than is generally the case?

I am, etc.,

H. K. Grant.

# THE PREMIUM AWARD

This is much the best set of Premium entries I have seen so far. The quality was universally high and judging between them was very difficult. Some of the poems in the commended class were as good as past premium poems, and I should have liked to award a prize to all the highly commended entries. All of them have imagination and evocative force, and especially notable for these qualities are "Christmas Tree" by Ellode Collins and "Myself" by Sheila Thorpe. "Creation" by Joan Krabbe is a beautiful sonnet of pastel colour and soft sounds—I like the arresting phrase "pale-slippered earth" for the autumn carpet of leaves. I liked the cold glitter of Eric Knight's "Transformation" and the curt, jagged emphasis of "Country Week-End" by Miss Slade-Baker; no words are wasted here,

> "Above the apples where wasps hummed bitterly
> September air was warmer than spiced cream".

I think the best poem is "Revolt in Eden" by Mrs. John Kertészffy and I award it £6 of the premium. It moved me more than any of the others; it has—though not by any means faultless—such tremendous drive and energy; the difficulties of a long sprung rhythm line are most competently handled (except in lines 7, 46 and 52); it has imagination and a great flow of life in it like the coursing of many waters, like the river of Eden.

The runner-up, Derek Stanford's "Words for Figures on a Natural Frieze" receives £4 of the Premium and is a great contrast to the other poem. Here all is gray, quiet sombre in monotones; yet in its way as vivid and as moving. These winning poems are both excellent examples of matching the style to the content, the one exuberant, the other self-contained. Stanford's poem is as hard as "winter's plated armour" of iron, and yet full of pity, by no means a "dull unpitying sound" after its passaged through this crucible. I think both these poems are memorable and I congratulate the writers.

T. W. Ramsey.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Jenefer Carlyon, London, W.1.
Ellode Collins, London, W.9.
Eric Knight, Barnt Green.
Joan Alison Krabbe, Reading.
G. F. Slade-Baker, London, S.W.1.
Malcolm H. Tattersall, Bexhill.
Sheila Thorpe, Ewell.

COMMENDED

Rachel Boulton, Taunton.
Joan Carstairs, Great Warley.
Gertrude Durrant, Bournemouth.
W. M. Pearson Jones, London, S.E.14.
Winifred Kingdon-Ward, London, W.2.
Margaret Marshall, Edinburgh.
Francis Newbold, Manchester.
Edith Roseveare, London, S.W.16.
C. Busby Smith, Gerrards Cross.
M. Snow, Oxford.
M. J. Stevens, Bath.
Lois H. Thomas, Sanderstead.

# REVOLT IN EDEN

The Angel lifted his sword and a sheet of flames descended
Thus shutting sweet Eden's world from the tremendous outer dark,
But past the angel a shadow leapt rushing with wails that ended
Far-far in the arid desert with a mournful and yearning bark.
The trees stood around in amazement; the animals hastily gathered,
Their rippling muscles a-stir 'neath fire-lit glossy furs;
The brooklets hushed up their voices and whispered: "Where is our Lord Who fathered
"All creatures alive, to tell us the meaning of what occurs?"

"Where's Eve?" demanded the flowers and turned their starry gazes
Scanning the winding pathways, her footprints eager to see.
"Where's Adam?" roaring the lion stalked searching through leafy mazes
Well sharing his quest with gazelles that kept him meek company.
"Where—where then is Man and Woman?" the primeval priesthood of forests,
The enormous pines and palms clamoured in sore bereavement,
Groping with trembling branches, tearing the cloudlets, their gold-mists,
Mistaking their shimmering trails for the paths where beloved Eve went.

Then suddenly shrieking waves of keening sorrow swept over
The blesséd mountains and vales. A storm, the first storm, unlashing
His ruthless furies, black clouds,—consoling starlight to cover,
Raved wildly through Eden's peace with thunderous lightnings flashing.
"Woe! Man and Woman exiled!" the tempest decreed the bleak tidings.
"Woe! Man and Woman has sinned, by the serpent beguiled and betrayed!"
To the fire-closed gate rushed all beasts from their peaceful and secret hidings,
And none of them shunned the unknown, their pulses throbbed unafraid.
"The dog has followed the master!" the horse cried aloud and sweeping
Leapt over the fiery wall,—was lost in the tenebrous murk.
Ah! there was a scrambling and scamp'ring,—by flames scorched, rock-torn and bleeding
The beasts tore past forces forbidding, their duty to Man none would shirk.

In vain those sinister voices that wakened the heights of the mountains
With whisp'ring or clangourous echoes, called out dread warnings to give;
In vain the glad meadows lured and the softly murmuring fountains,
The animals would not consent their well-sheltered lives to live.
In vain the fair host of angels descended on stormbeaten pinions,
Barring the way to destruction, the way of devotion and pain.
"Beware! you must not find Adam, not serve him, deluded minions!
"Your love is misguided and sinful, your yearning for freedom is vain!
"All life, outside Eden, is curséd and gods of the darkness are haunting
"The wilderness Man has to face with his burden of knowledge and sin!"
Yet on and on rushed the beasts defying the threats and the daunting:
"The Lord made us servants of Adam and bade him rule our kin!"

"Begone!—And be slain by your master, by his sons,—be slain by each-other!
"Hence your seed shall prey on Adam's, as woe! your seed shall be preyed on!"
"Aye! Even so let it be then!—Our lives for sweet Eve, the Mother!"
And headlong they fled and sped outwards and never there tarried or failed one.
The flood of their heaving bodies, the force of their zealful contesting
Then whirled up mountainous dust-clouds down thundering the desert accurst.
A-flame were their faithful hearts and their love-sped feet wingéd, unresting,
They did not heed gods of the unknown, the Demons of Hunger and Thirst.
The bees like a gold-dotted veil and the butterflies, soaring flowers,
A cumulus huge, of insects, sailed forth; the hum of their speed-thrilled wings
Subdued by the whir of the birds that quickly left lofty bowers,
Commencing with new-born instincts their mysterious wanderings.
The trees were tearing their roots, were straining and striving for freedom;
No angel guarded the gate where silence and deep sorrow reigned,
When solemn pilgrims left Eden, the noble giants of treedom,
Trailing their roots over embers, sap-spilling and open-veined.

Followed in their wake all plants, most humble weeds, proudest flowers,
Followed in their wake two trees,—the trees of Wisdom and Life.
"Ah! why was I made for temptation? Who cursed my happiest hours?
"My branches, thus shamed, be condemned to share Man's struggle and strife!"

When passing the gate of Eden the tree of Life bowed with meekness,
Dragged silently roots and branches, stretched out his arms like a cross;
It dreamt of a sacred Burden it was yet to bear in its weakness,
One Fruit, to give Life Eternal to way-wearied human dross.

When over deserted Eden The Father bent down,—deep shadows
Where looming above the glories He once created for Man.
He gathered the streams and the brooklets that wept over flowerless meadows
And bade them follow all creatures, and bade them to find Man again.
Then lonely, for only The Father can bear thus the burden eternal,
He lifted up Earth to the stars, in solitude blessing the world.
"Well done! Tiny spark so rebellious, defy me—and be thou the kernel
"Of pain till the sacred flower of Love is reared and unfurled!"

MARGIT KERTÉSZFFY.

## WORDS FOR FIGURES ON A NATURAL FRIEZE

I see them waiting at the high-road's edge:
young conscript soldiers on their way from home;
in ones or twos, the twilight gathering round them—
hitch-hiking ghosts, aloofly woebegone.

Impersonal lies the route in front of them.
Vaguely uneasy at each passing car,
they shrug their shoulders with a stoic motion;
loving what was, resigned to things which are.

Dusk draws its hood about the head of evening.
The soldiers stamp their feet upon the ground,
which rings, encased in winter's plated armour.
abruptly, with a dull unpitying sound.

Farewell dim figures! frost and darkness chafe you,
and laws of chance seemed called upon in vain.
Our fate, like yours, consists in powerless waiting.
borne once before, and now endured again.

DEREK STANFORD.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following subscribers to the Fund inaugurated on the occasion of the retirement of Mr. Galloway Kyle, formerly Director of the Poetry Society, are acknowledged, in addition to the list of names published in previous issues of *The Poetry Review:*

Miss A. F. Meadows; Miss N de Liebhaber Robson; Mrs. E. M. Mann.

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## THE POETRY SOCIETY'S GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

A General Council of the Poetry Society will meet at 33 Portman Square, London, W.1., at 3.30 p.m., on Friday, March 11, 1949.

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## THE POETRY SOCIETY'S AUDITIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines, continually increases.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges or private individuals. Applications for audition dates should be made as long as possible beforehand.

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## THE POETRY HOUR AT 33 PORTMAN SQUARE, W.1.

A new series of readings started in January, tracing the development of English poetry from Chaucer to the present-day. Every other week the programme is embracing poets of the present century thus giving fair place to contemporary as well as traditional poetry. All these readings are being given by the finest verse speakers available. The dominant idea being to provide programmes of the highest order in subject and presentation.

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| Friday, Feb. 11 at 6.15. | *JOHN MILTON*<br>A reading for 2 voices. Sheila Bains and Reginald Matthews, with Neville Braybrooke in the chair. |
| Friday, Feb. 18 at 6.15. | *WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR*<br>A reading of his Poetry. |
| Friday, Feb. 25 at 6.15. | *THE FANTASTICKS*<br>A reading of some 17th Century Poetry introduced by the Rev. W. S. Scott, M.A., and read by Christopher Hassall. |
| Friday, March 4 at 6.15. | *MARTIN SKINNER*<br>A reading of his Poetry. Introduced by T. H. Foley. |

## THE GREENWOOD COMPETITIONS FOR 1948 AND 1949
## DATE EXTENDED

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Owing to the shortage of entries, the Poetry Society has decided to extend the closing date of the Competition for 1948 to 28th February, 1949.

Entries should be addressed "The Greenwood Prize," 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editor, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*.

Entries received after the closing date will be held over for the 1949 Competition, closing date, 31st December, 1949.

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## THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above competition continues as before with the offer of £10 in prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3.)
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition", *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be 15th March, 1949.

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## THE HOWARD PARSONS EPIGRAM COMPETITION

The Poetry Society is empowered by Mr. Howard Parsons, a long-standing member of the Society, to offer the following prizes, endowed by him for an Epigram Competition.

1st prize, 5 guineas; 2nd prize, 2 guineas; 3rd prize, 1 guinea. Entries which should not have been previously published should be marked "Epigram" and should not bear a stamped addressed envelope, as MSS. cannot be returned. They should be addressed to The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, to reach here not later than 1st March, 1949. The Society reserves the right to extend the closing date of the competition should none of the entries reach the required standard.

## THE POETRY SOCIETY JUNIOR VERSE COMPETITION

The Poetry Society have pleasure in announcing an annual Junior Verse Competition. Schools throughout the country are invited to co-operate in submitting the work of their pupils.

The Competition will be divided into two classes:

(*a*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age up to thirteen years last birthday. There will be a book prize inscribed by the Poetry Society.

(*b*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age from fourteen to seventeen years last birthday. There will be a book prize, inscribed by the Poetry Society and four additional prizes of one year's Membership to the Poetry Society.

The poem may be on any subject. Closing date, 30th June, 1949. Entries to be addressed to: The Junior Verse Competition, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear the names and addresses of competitors and copies should be retained as these cannot be returned.

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## THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1949

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing the third Annual Competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet upon any subject. One of the two forms adopted by Lord Alfred Douglas in his sonnets, must be used; these are:

For the Octave — 1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1
For the Sextet — 3, 4, 5; 3, 4, 5 *or* 3, 4; 3, 4; 3, 4

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely marked "Sonnet." Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1949. Address "Sonnet Competition," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

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## POEMS OF PLACE COMPETITION FOR 1949

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems, previously unpublished, of not more than 100 lines. All entries should be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author; poems should be addressed to "The Holmes Prize," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, not later than 1st April, 1949. The judges may divide the prize money at their discretion, and the winning poem or poems may be published in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors are asked to keep copies of their entries as these cannot be returned.

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## THE POETRY SOCIETY'S CRITICAL SERVICE

The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing the continuance of its Critical Service. Two poems only may be submitted for criticism, for a minimum fee of 5s. The charge for the criticism of each additional poem is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.